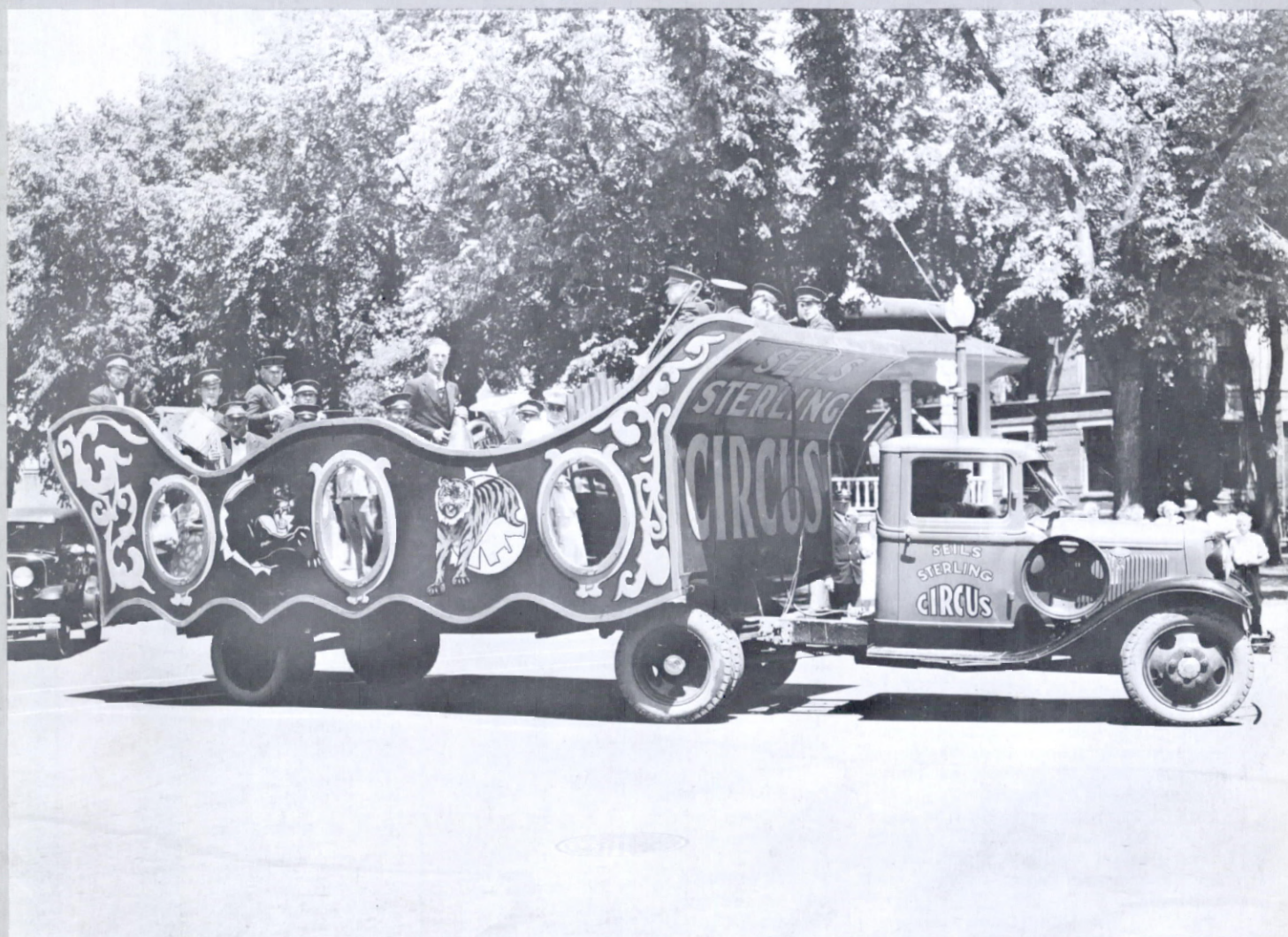


Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



JULY-AUGUST 1982

BANDWAGON



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The bandwagon of the Seils-Sterling 4 Ring Circus is the cover subject this issue. The photo was taken on June 16, 1934 in Waupaca, Wis., by professional photographer Charles H. Hansen.

Prof. Arthur Heller and his twelve piece big show band are shown. An air calliope is in the wagon, and this is perhaps the only show using a calliope with the band for parades.

Pete, Bill and Albert Lindemann were the show owners. Appearing in the performance was Hal Silver, now known as Hubert Castle. The winter quarters in 1934 was in Mt. Vernon, Mo.

The Lindemanns were from Sheboygan, Wis., and the circus was very well known in Wisconsin and played a large number of dates in that state each season. The

show played 31 Wisconsin towns in 1934. Pfening Collection.

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The Fred Buchanan Railroad Circuses 1923-31 Robbins Bros. Circus

Part VI - The 1928 Season

by Joseph T. Bradbury

During the closing weeks of 1927 Fred Buchanan had publicly announced his plans to enlarge Robbins Bros. Circus to 30 cars for the coming season. During the tour just completed he had accumulated the necessary rail equipment to accomplish this and had it shipped to the Granger quarters. Also on hand were a number of wagons he had purchased the previous summer from surplus Ringling-Barnum equipment at Bridgeport which had not as yet been used. After the shop forces in Granger completed the necessary renovation and painting of this equipment Buchanan would set out on the 1928 route with the largest show he had ever owned, a 30 car Robbins Bros. Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus.

The trade publications were rather quiet during the first half of January on activities at Granger. The Jan. 21, 1928 *Billboard* had a few brief notes which quoted a report from a Tom Hanly stating that Earl Sennott, the Robbins general superintendent, was currently on a two week pleasure trip before starting up the shops in full force. It was said that Whitey Corney will be in charge of the baggage stock this coming season and Baggage Stock Irish will have the harness shop and be assisted by Trainhand Scott.

The following week saw a full report

from the Granger quarters as the Jan. 29, 1928 *Billboard* said the program of repairing and redecorating the Robbins equipment has been inaugurated at the Buchanan farm. J. H. Cox is in charge of the blacksmith shop, Joe Bullington, the carpenter shop, and Chuck Behle, the paint department. John (Elephant Dutch) Schultz has the menagerie animals in fine condition, while the ring stock and baggage stock are being capably cared for by Walter Laedeke and Ted (Whitey) Carney. Levi Dyer, who has been in St. Louis the past month, has returned to quarters and resumed his duties as steward. Other notes in the report said that Kenneth Waite, producing clown, has recently arrived from Kansas City and is busy assembling people and equipment for his act, Circus Days, which will open on the Junior Orpheum Time. Peggy Poole has been framing his pit show. R. O. Scatterday, banner solicitor, was a visitor in quarters last week and W. T. Buchanan, general press representative, has been conferring with Fred Buchanan regarding publicity policies. An item noted that O. L. Gilson, musical director, has written two fine band numbers, one of them—"Robbins Bros. Grand Entry," dedicated to Fred Buchanan, is to be used as the tournament march in Bert Rickman's

new spectacle. (Author's note: Robbins Bros. Grand Entry by O. L. Gilson has become one of the best known circus marches ever written. It was played by the Carson & Barnes band in 1981.)

A week later the *Billboard* said that Ralph Noble, supt. of canvas, and Jack Le Blair, supt. of props, were visitors to the Granger quarters during the week looking over equipment of their respective departments, ordering needed supplies, and organizing the work of "re-adding" things for 1928. The article also noted that Louis M. Latta, a director of CFA of Indianola, Iowa, was a recent visitor, and that a carload of horses from Barrett & Zimmerman, St. Paul, Minn. was unloaded and housed in the ring and baggage stock stables.

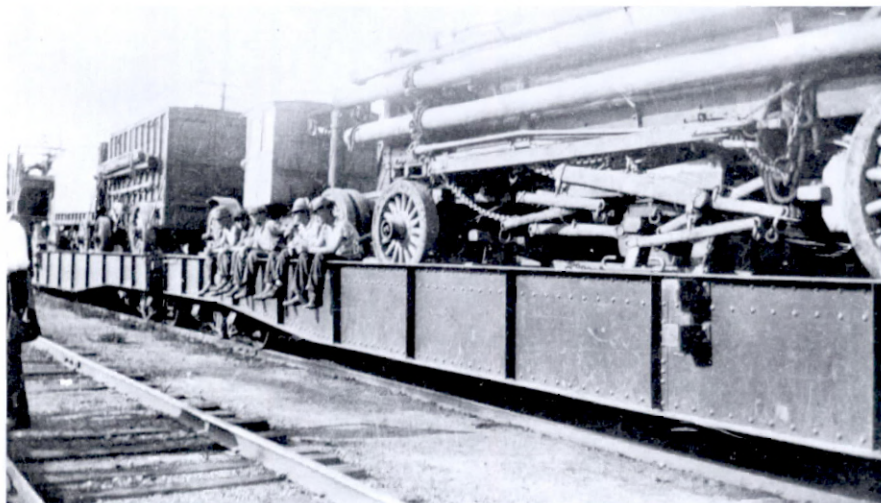
The April 1928 issue of *The White Tops* also had this interesting account of Louis Latta's visit to Granger. It read as follows:

"National Director Louis Latta was a recent visitor to Robbins Bros. quarters at Granger, Iowa, and reports great activities with Fred Buchanan highly enthusiastic over the coming season and has a great outlay of circus properties and equipment, all spic and span. He has quite a few of the gorgeous Ringling parade wagons and cages. Many new animals have been received and a number of foreign acts are expected for the program.

"The menagerie will include white polar bears, black Rocky Mountain bears, Russian cinnamon bears, male and female lions, leopards, wildcats, jaguars, monkeys, zebras, ostriches, llamas, deer, elk, sacred cows, hyenas, birds of all kinds, hippopotamus, and the lead stock will have 10 elephants, 16 camels, 4 llamas, 4 sacred cows, 2 Scottish deer, and 2 reindeer."

The March 10, 1928 *Billboard* had this advertisement. "ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. WANT. Wardrobe man. Must have big show experience. FOR THE BIG SHOW. Fancy ropers, trick riders, Bucking Horse Riders, and one cowboy, 6 ft. tall, not too heavy. In answering please give age, height, weight, and photo if possible. Girls for Ballet and small Prima Donna. Can use woman with one, two, or three children not exceeding 12 years of age. Address: Bert E. Rickman, Equestrian Director, Granger, Iowa.

Photo No. 1—Robbins Bros. loaded flat cars at Parsons, Kan., July 24, 1928. Third vehicle from right appears to have been of Ringling Bros. origin. Note the outside wooden braces spaced close together giving it the Moeller built "look." The show possibly picked up the wagon from Ringling surplus in Baraboo earlier in the season. Photo by Arthur Toevis (Joe Fleming Collection).



WANT. Good horseshoer, address W. E. Sinnott, Granger, Iowa."

Another advertisement appeared in the Mar. 31, 1928 *Billboard*. "ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Tintype, Photo, and Farm Paper Privileges Open. Season opens April 25 at Perry, Ia. Address, Winter Quarters, Granger, Iowa. (Pete Kennedy, seat man, write Ralph Noble)."

The Robbins quarters got a big play in *The Des Moines Register* issue of March 22 when almost an entire page was devoted to pictures of the animals and a major story was also carried.

According to the Haviriland lists the 1928 Robbins Bros. train of 30 cars consisted of 1 advance, 7 stocks, 15 flats, and 7 coaches. This would mean that 2 stocks and 3 flats constituted the 5 car enlargement of the train. In 1927 the show had moved on 1 advance, 5 stocks, 12 flats, and 7 coaches. Both the *Billboard* and eyewitness accounts reported in *The White Tops* confirm that the Robbins 1928 train had 30 cars but no breakdown as to type of car is made in either publication. We must assume the Haviriland listing is correct. Again, readers are advised that photos are not available which would give an exact picture as to the type of each individual flat car in the train. Also remember that we have positive evidence of only five Mt. Vernon built cars being in the Robbins train at any time. There was one additional steel flat car of an undetermined manufacture. The remainder of the flats are assumed to have been of the 62 ft. semi-steel, or wooden variety.

The ten elephants carried in 1928 are the same that were in the herd the previous season, Columbia, Ena, Trilby, Big Katie, Big Jennie, Margaret, Blanche, Tony, Vera (Big Bingo), and Little Babe.

The street parade was the most spectacular to date for Buchanan's show. Parade wagons included the Spellman set, Belgium, United States, Great Britain, France, Africa (often called India or Hippo), China, Panama, and South America, also the Two Hemispheres wagon, the former Yankee Robinson air calliope, and the steam calliope housed in the old Forepaugh Lion chariot wagon. Although there are no photos to confirm it is assumed the four pony floats which Buchanan acquired in 1927, Cinderella, Santa Claus, Old Woman in Shoe, and Mother Goose appeared in the street parade. However, the former Barnum & Bailey steam calliope (commonly called the clown and horn) was not put into use on the show until the 1929 season. Photos do show that the huge former Barnum & Bailey hippo den with corner statues which Buchanan got at the Bridgeport quarters in 1927 was carried. It housed large hooved, hay eating animals.



Photo No. 2—Robbins Bros. loaded flat cars at Parsons, Kan., July 24, 1928. Cage at extreme left is former Barnum & Bailey hippo den which the show got in Bridgeport in 1927. It was used to house large hay eating animals instead of a hippo when on Robbins Bros. in period 1928-30. Photo by Arthur Toevs (Joe Fleming Collection).

Miss Iowa, the hippo, remained in the den built for her the previous season. Belgium continued to serve as the No. 1 bandwagon, while the No. 2 band rode United States. A group of Indians in native dress were atop the Two Hemispheres which was placed in the center of the parade.

The 1928 big top was not as large as the one Buchanan had earlier promised but instead was a khaki colored 140 ft. round with three 50's.

The April 14, 1928 *Billboard* said that Nick Gallucci has finished vaudeville dates and will soon leave for Granger, Iowa to join Robbins Bros. making his 6th season with the

Photo No. 3—Lead bandwagon (Belgium tableau) in Robbins Bros. street parade at Logansport, Ind., May 11, 1928. Pfening Collection.



Fred Buchanan show. Mary Gallucci, midget with Robbins, has made a rhinestone gown which she will feature in the sideshow.

As the show neared its April 25 opening in Perry, Iowa it was announced that Fred Buchanan's Robbins Bros. would make its first invasion of Indiana this season, which will be the farthest east the show has every been. Reports were that the show would play Terre Haute, Anderson, Richmond, Logansport, LaFayette, and perhaps one or two other stands. It was already known there would be opposition at Richmond with Floyd and Howard King's 15 car Gentry Bros. scheduled for April 28 and Robbins Bros. booked for May 7.

The winter and early spring of 1928 had been an interesting one on the circus scene. In addition to the news of Robbins Bros. enlarging to 30 cars, John Robinson Circus had taken delivery on new Mt. Vernon built flat cars, and Ringling-Barnum had ordered a complete new set of stock and flats from the Warren Tank Car Co. It was planned to equip the first section with the new cars for the 1928 season and for 1929 all would be on hand.



Photo No. 4—France tableau with costumed performers on top in Robbins Bros. street parade at Logansport, Ind., May 11, 1928. Pfening Collection.

The *White Tops* reported an interesting development at Granger. As customary, shortly before opening date each spring, the animals were taken from their permanent cages in quarters and placed in the road dens to get acclimated to the out of doors weather when along came a late spring blizzard making it necessary to move all of the varmints back inside and get the heat in the buildings going again.

The show's official CALL advertisement appeared in the April 14, 1928 *Billboard* and read as follows: "CALL, All people engaged with ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS will report on the lot at Perry, Iowa, 10 a.m. Monday, April 23rd. Show opens 25th. Please acknowledge this call to ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS, Granger, Iowa. Performers—Address Bert E. Rickman; Musicians—Address O. A. Gilson; Side Show People—Address J. E. Ogden; Canvasmen, Seatmen—Address Ralph Noble; Ushers—Address Harry De Fratis; Trainmen—Address Jack G. King; Drivers—Address Ted Carney; Cook House—Address Levi Dyer; Animal and Elephant Men—Address John Schultz; Property Men—Address S. Steinhuser; Electricians—Address W. D. Willis; Car Porters—Address Joe Kelly; Candy Butchers—Address Mose Becker."

It was now April and the 1928 circus season was ready to begin. It would be a presidential election year which would see the Republican nominee Herbert Hoover going against the Democrats' Al Smith and a circus tradition of many years standing had it that such election years were never good for circus business. Robbins' press representative F. Robert Saul mentions this in a letter printed later in this article. Railroad circuses, flat car type, going out in 1928 included Ringling-Barnum, 100 cars (approx.); Sells-Floto, 30 cars; Hagenbeck-

Wallace, 30 cars; John Robinson, 30 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Robbins Bros., 30 cars; Christy Bros., 20 cars; Sparks, 20 cars; Gentry Bros., 15 cars; Walter L. Main, 10 cars, and also Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show on 30 cars. Elmer Jones' 3 car gilly type Cole & Rogers was also on the road. Overland shows, many of them fully motorized but some still moving with a combination of trucks and horses, included Downie Bros., Mighty Haag; Seils-Sterling; Barnett Bros. (Canada); Zellmar Bros. (title changed to Schell Bros. later in season); Moon Bros.; Honest Bill; M. L. Clark & Sons; Silvan-Drew; Atterbury & Hooge; Vanderburg Bros.; Russell Bros.; Stark Bros.; Hunt's; Ketrow Bros.; LaMont Bros.; Dorsey Bros.; Marlow Bros.; Brison Bros.; and Orton Bros. Railroad shows parading were Sparks; Christy Bros.; Robbins Bros.; Gentry Bros.; Walter L. Main; and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show. Many of the larger overland shows also paraded.

Robbins Bros. moved out of the Granger quarters and on to its initial stand at Perry, Iowa, where rehearsals began on April 23. The official opener for the 1928 season then came two days later on April 25.

The May 19, 1928 *Billboard* reviewed the show's performance in an article headlined "ROBBINS PRESENTING VERY GOOD PROGRAM." It read as follows:

"The Robbins Bros. Circus, which had a splendid opening at Perry, Ia. April 25, has been scoring all along the line. It is in its fifth season. The show is giving a parade which is a big draw. There are 13 mammoth tableau wagons, representing as many countries; three bands, including clown band; two calliopes, five sections of mounted riders, including cowboys and girls; 20 open dens, Sioux Indians from the Rosebud Reservation, 10 elephants and 12 camels.

"Following a half-hour concert of classical and popular numbers by O. A. Gilson's Band, the big-show program, a very good one, opens with a novel and spectacular production from



Photo No. 5—Two Hemispheres wagon with single Indian in native dress on top in Robbins Bros. street parade, Logansport, Ind., May 11, 1928. Pfening Collection.

the pen of the show's equestrian director, Bert Rickman, entitled 'Santa Claus in Fairyland.' There is a big cast of principals, a ballet of 20 girls, horses, elephants, camels, etc. Marceline Montague Duffy, diva of the white tops; Minnie Atzen, prima donna; Mildred Gallucci, concert soprano soloist, with Charles Robinson as the Prince of Fairyland; Frederick Poole, female impersonator, as Mme. LaZella, the 'court dancer,' in three clever dance numbers, and Santa Claus, driving the ponies makes a decidedly novel and picturesque opening. Mr. Gilson has arranged a fine musical score for the production.

"The circus is featuring the Joe Hodgini family (five) of riders (Joe, riding comedian; Etta and Joe, Jr. and Mary Rickman and Joe Marvello). The act has stopped the show at every performance. The Hadji Ben Liazeed Troupe, including the famous athletes, the Grunatho Sisters, presents some fine acrobatic numbers. Excellent juggling, balancing, wire-walking and aerial numbers are offered by the Matsumodo troupe of eight Japanese. The elephant acts are handled by Major Bill Wallace, Peggy Marshall and Mildred Aylesworth.

"Kate and Tom Smith offer an unusual act of trained dogs, ponies, monkeys and Russian wolfhounds. The swinging ladder and iron-jaw numbers, with 16 girls participating, is a big flash. The show has a fine group of high-school horses. The joeys put over some clever numbers and walk-arounds. The bucking Ford, an auto-comedy act, by the Ford Smiths, is a wow. The program closes with Buchanan's pageant, 'Historic America,' which depicts the principal events and characters in American history.

"John E. (Doc) Odgen, manager of the side show, is offering an unusual-

ly high class show. The roster includes Jess C. McBride, asst. manager; Otis Hackman and George S. Harley, ticket boxes; Harry Bernhardt, ticket talker; Madame Lorrna, second sight; Harry DeVonde, Punch, magic, and lectures; Grace DeVonde, sword box; Millie Viola, snake charmer; Princess Marie, Midget; Millie Cleo, sword walker; Elizabeth, Albino princess; Mildred Gallucci, singer; Cuban Mack, sword swallower; The Seminoles, impalement act; Willie Bowlegs, Indian juggler; Prof. Joe Riggers Band and Minstrels; Hawaiian theater, with four dancers and four musicians.

"The midway is unusually attractive with its concession and show tents in colors of orange and blue. Peggy Poole's five-pole pit show offers the human butterfly dancers, illusions and snakes.

"Ed Hopkins, supt. of the Annex, has designed and built a fine, classy, and attractive side show. The inside is of orange and light blue, worked out in a new, fanciful, ornamental and elaborate design. The show has a long line of double-decker paintings or banners.

"From front to back the outfit has all new canvas from Baker & Lockwood. New flags, pennants and many gay streamers grace the top of every center and quarter pole. All seats, including the big grandstand of highback chairs, are all new. The center poles are painted red and the quarter and side poles blue. The cages, dens, chariots and tableau wagons are all newly gilded and gold leafed. Three new tableau wagons have been added to the equipment.

"The personnel includes Fred Buchanan, owner and manager; Dan Hoffman, general agent and traffic manager; C. W. Buchanan, manager of privileges; W. T. Buchanan, general press representative; R. C. Buchanan, press rep. and story man; Mr. Reeling,

Photo No. 6—United States bandwagon with No. 2 big show band on top in Robbins Bros. street parade, Logansport, Ind., May 11, 1928. Pfening Collection.



ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS



Photo No. 8—This Robbins Bros. litho featuring an American Indian in native headdress was used in 1928. Pfening Collection.

advertising expert; John Schiller, auditor; James Morse, legal adjuster; Les G. Minger, secretary; Charles Meyers, treasurer; F. Robert Saul, press representative with show; Frank R. Ballenger, manager advertising car; J. R. Hervey and Manny Gunn, contracting agents; E. C. Reid, special agent; Ed Hirner and Al West, 24 hr. men; Bert Rickman, equestrian director; Kenneth R. Waite, producing clown; John E. Ogden, manager side show; R. O. Scatterday, banner solicitor; O. A. Gilson, musical director; W. Earl Sinnott, general supt.; J. C. Cox, chief mechanic; Dick Hutchinson, head blacksmith; Ralph Noble, supt. of canvas; Charles Stella, asst. supt. canvas; John Schultz, supt. menagerie; Francis Hogan, supt. of animals; W. G. Wallace, supt. of elephants; Frank McFarland, supt. of camels; John Kennedy, asst. supt. of elephants; George Gasink, supt. of ponies; Ted Carney, boss hostler; L. S. Aylesworth, supt. of wardrobe; W. D.

Willies, supt. of lights; Jack King, trainmaster; Dr. C. Burt Richeson, head of medical dept.; Charles Sheffer, ring stock boss; William Ganoe, supt. front door; Frank Mose Becker, supt. candy butchers; Fred Polle, manager pit show; Levi Dyer, steward."

The extensive personnel listing of this article had a total of 21 members of the big show band and 11 in the side show band. The Men's Dressing Room roster had about 45 including those of the wild west department and the Women's listed 28. The Indian Village consisted of 14 men and women.

Following the opening in Perry the show played additional Iowa dates at Cedar Rapids, Maquoketa, and Davenport, then moved over into Illinois at Peoria which was followed by Springfield, Decatur, Champaign and Danville. Next came a move into Indiana, the heartland of the American Circus Corporation, owners of Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, and John Robinson. Stands booked by Robbins in the Hoosier State included Terre Haute, Richmond, Newcastle, Anderson, Muncie, Logansport, and LaFayette. We are pleased to present here a splendid set of parade photos taken at the Logansport date.

Nearly every issue of *The Billboard* contained a report from the Robbins show. It was noted that the show played to good business during its early season stands in Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. Mention was also made of a free auto show under the direction of General Motors being put on and is a big draw. The auto show became an interesting sidelight of the Robbins circus for the next few seasons. Performance notes said that Kate Smith has a dog, "Sandy," which walks the tight rope, goes up stairs on his front feet and plays on bells. Bill Wallace, assisted by Capt. Dutch Schultz, is presenting a new number with the elephants. Little Joey Hodgini is ap-

Photo No. 7—Great Britain tableau with sideshow band on top in Robbins Bros. street parade, Logansport, Ind., May 11, 1928. Pfening Collection.



pearing in his father's riding act and also has the role of Little Jack Horner in the spec.

The White Tops also reported that Robbins Bros. business during its opening week and run through Illinois and Indiana was good. Circus fans noted some of the acts in the Robbins performance were the Joe Hodgini riders, Ligazeeds, Arabian troupe, Allison's, European Flying Ballet, the Ten Cossacks and seven Gerimonde sisters, plus the Indians from the Rosebud Reservation.

Following performances at La Fayette, Ind., May 12, the show quickly moved back into Illinois to play Joliet, LaSalle, Peru, Dixon, Rockford, and Freeport before returning to Iowa. The *Billboard* reported the Illinois stands gave a good take. Dixon had not had a circus in a number of seasons and during the matinee 500 patients from the State Orphanage and Hospital for Crippled Children were entertained by Col. Buchanan.

When the show was at Rockford, Ill., May 18, Joe Taggart wrote *The White Tops* that he accomplished several good deeds for the circus. He got the parade license removed for the day and also obtained permission for the show to parade right through the main street of the city, a street which had been closed to circus parades for the last 10 years. Taggart also secured the best circus lot for them at a savings of \$135.00.

Dubuque, May 21, was the first stand on the return visit to Iowa and was followed by eight more dates in the show's home state. The June 9, 1928 *Billboard* said the show had big houses at Waterloo, Marshalltown, Harlan, Sac City, Des Moines, and Atlantic. At Des Moines the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, Chamber of Commerce and the circus fans made it a big day for the show, which used the lot at Second and Elm Avenues for the first time. Governor Hammill also at-

Fort Smith Tues., Oct. 23



tended. The circus obtained free license, water and lot. Robbins had the biggest matinee of the season so far at Atlantic, Iowa, May 24. Ruddy McPherson joined at Waterloo, May 22, and is in charge of the uptown ticket sales and serves as assistant treasurer. He replaced Herbert Shellmeyer who left to go into business at West Bend, Iowa. Louis Ingelheim, formerly private chauffeur

Photo No. 9—Newspaper advertisement for Robbins Bros. stand at Fort Smith, Ark., Oct. 23, 1938. Pfening Collection.

for the late Col. Joseph C. Miller, is now acting in a similar capacity for Mr. Buchanan. A final note said that Rube Dyer is scoring with his stilt-walking turn and both Doc Ogden, manager of the side show, and Peggy Poole, in charge of the annex, have been doing very good business.

The White Tops also carried a report on the big doings at Des Moines which were attended by a number of CFA members. The article said there was a capacity house at evening performance. Just preceding the start of the program, equestrian director Bert Rickman introduced Gov. John Hammill, CFA No. 380, and the governor in a short address said that among Iowa's many assets was Robbins Bros. Circus with winter quarters at Granger, Iowa, 19 miles away, which is owned and operated by Fred Buchanan. He congratulated Col. Buchanan for the clean and efficient organization he had built up and commended the show to the people of Iowa. At the conclusion of the governor's address he was given an ovation by the audience.

Another *Billboard* article said that R. M. Harvey was now back with Robbins Bros. as traffic manager, taking the place of general agent Dan Hoffman who is confined to his room in a Chicago hotel suffering from a sprained right ankle. It also mentioned that Mabel Ward, formerly with the Flying Wards, joined the show at Richmond, Ind., May 7. She is performing on the flying rings and also doing a fine roll-up or endurance act. Also coming on the show in Richmond was Crazy Ray Choisser to play the steam calliope in the parade and lot concerts.

Robbins had now been out a little over a month but none of the trade publications had commented on the weather conditions the show had found along the route. The spring and early summer months of 1928 were wet ones in many parts of the country, especially the mid-west, the same as had occurred the previous season. John Robinson again had its problems with flooded lots and an overdose of Jupiter Pluvius. The hardest hit show, however, was Floyd and Howard King's 15 car Gentry Bros. Circus. Rain plagued Gentry for many weeks and damaged the show so heavily financially, in reality it was the beginning of the end for the outfit which folded in October 1929. Rob-



Photo No. 14—Unloading Robbins Bros. flat cars about 1928. Big top pole wagon is headed down the runs. Manny Gunn Collection and furnished through courtesy of Joe Rettinger.

bins Bros. surely had its dose of rain and mud at some stands early in the 1928 season but evidently it did not affect the take at the wagon adversely.

The last of the current run of Iowa stands came at Sioux City on May 30, Decoration Day, and the next day the show moved into South Dakota at Sioux Falls which was followed by Mitchell, Yankton, Huron, and Brookings, after which, the route took the show into Minnesota to play Tracy, Mankato, and Rochester.

The June 16, 1928 *Billboard* told of events during this period. Iowa dates at Ft. Dodge, Spencer, and Sioux City saw good turnouts as did the three South Dakota stands. Other notes in the write-up said that Georgia Jones, Bessie Gunn, and Peggy Marshall are presenting a new and daring iron-jaw turn. The *Argus-Leader* of Sioux City, Ia. gave Mabel Ward fine mention for her rollups and flying Roman ring act. At Sioux Falls, S.D., May 31, more than 300 inmates of the South Dakota Deaf and Dumb School were guests of Mr. Buchanan at the matinee. Also in Sioux Falls, local radio station KSOO broadcast the arrival, unloading, and parade of the show, and station WNAX did the same thing when Robbins played Yankton, S.D. on June 2. Troupers from other shows playing nearby were almost daily visitors. While Robbins was in this area, personnel from the George D. Sweet's Stock Company, playing a week's engagement at Marshall, Iowa came over one day.

The show entered Wisconsin at La Crosse, June 9, then played additional stands in the state at Baraboo, Watertown, Janesville, Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, Appleton, Sturgeon Bay, Green Bay, Wausau, Wisconsin Rapids, Tomah, and Viroqua, making it the most extensive coverage of a single state so far in the season. The July 7, 1928 *Billboard* had this most interesting short piece concerning the Robbins Bros. recent stand in Baraboo, Wis. on June 11. The article was headed, "ROBBINS SHOW BUYS FIVE CARS AT BARABOO." It read as follows:

"When the Robbins Bros. Circus was at Baraboo, Wis., Manager Fred Buchanan purchased five cars of the old Ringling and Forepaugh-Sells equipment, and paraphernalia to go with the cars. These were added at Winona, Minn." (Robbins played Winona 14 days later on June 25.)

This short report is one of so many cryptic, mysterious, but fascinating bits of information the researching circus historian comes across. Frustratingly, no other details are given in subsequent issues of the trade publications. Actually what does the report really mean? Does it mean Buchanan purchased five railroad cars which formerly were used to



Photo No. 15—Unloading baggage wagon from Robbins Bros. flat cars, about 1928. Note cages loaded on the flat car on opposite track. Manny Gunn Collection (Joe Rettinger).

transport the Ringling Bros. or Forepaugh-Sells Circus? Or does it mean he got five carloads of equipment which were actually loaded on system cars? Several historians are of the opinion that surplus rail equipment did remain in the Baraboo area some 10 years after the last Ringling circus train pulled out and the show's former quarters abandoned in favor of the Barnum & Bailey winter home in Bridgeport, Conn. The *Billboard* story does seem to indicate it was ex-circus rail cars that were involved and that it would probably take the 14 days before delivery to get them in shape to travel, or possibly for Buchanan to make financial arrangements. Winona was the closest future stand to Baraboo and it's logical they would be sent there. The type of car involved is not known; possibly flat, stock, and coaches were all involved. The question is now asked. What did Buchanan do with his newly purchased cars? There is no report that at any time he ever enlarged his show above 30 cars, although as will be learned later there was talk of the show enlarging to 35, even 40 cars sometime in the future. An educated guess would be that after the 5 cars reached Winona they were used to replace older cars by a like number which were then either sold or shipped to the Granger quarters. A further educated guess by the author is that some wagons were also involved in the deal. Photos taken later in the 1928 as well as succeeding seasons show that a number of what are clearly ex-Ringling baggage wagons were on Robbins Bros. These wagons have the typical Moeller built "look"—thick wooden outside braces placed rather close together. Photo

No. 1 pictures such a wagon taken later in 1928. One of the last baggage wagons to be found in the area around the old Granger quarters was one of these ex-Ringling type which the late Don Smith found and photographed in a field near Granger in 1952. There is also a cage-tableau den with corner statues, highly suspect of being a former Forepaugh-Sells vehicle, which is shown loaded on a Robbins flat car in 1929. This photo plus additional data on this wagon will be run in the next installment. Although we could never find another photo of this tab-den on either Forepaugh-Sells, Ringling Bros., or Barnum & Bailey the late Dick Conover and myself speculated the wagon "could" have come to Buchanan from Baraboo.

Another article in the same issue of *Billboard* said that while in Baraboo the Robbins show was visited by Ben, Charles, Wallie and other members of the Gollmar family. Mrs. Al Ringling also visited. The report said that the show had a good matinee and big night house at Sturgeon Bay, Wis., June 18, as well as a large afternoon and capacity house at night in Green Bay. A good afternoon crowd came at Wausau, June 20, but no night performance was given due to a severe storm. The show loaded and moved on to Wisconsin Rapids where there were two big houses. At Tomah, June 22, there was a good matinee and fair night crowd. At Viroqua, the final date in Wisconsin, June 23, there was a capacity crowd in the afternoon and fair turnout at night. The town had not seen a circus in several years. It was mentioned that the Ponca Bill's Wild West performers, as the Robbins aftershow was titled, has been making a big hit in which Col. W. F. Fleming is featured. The lineup includes Luther and Tommy Privett, Buckskin Al Wills, Hank Lawton, Wild Bill Lossing, Dewey Agnew, Nate Hill, and Wilbur Allison. In Oshkosh, Wis.,



Photo No. 10—Panama tableau in Robbins Bros. parade at Parsons, Kan., July 24, 1928. Photo by Arthur Toeves (Joe Fleming Collection).

June 15, the local Kiwanis Club entertained 500 pupils from the grammar grades at the matinee.

A return to Minnesota came at Winona, June 15, and the show remained in the state to play Preston, Austin, and Jackson, before going over in South Dakota for a single date at Madison, June 29, and then back into Iowa at Hawarden and five additional stands in the state.

The July 14, 1928 *Billboard* said the show experienced a turnaway matinee at Winona, Minn. which was followed by a capacity night house. Preston was another fine day as was Austin. It was impossible to show downtown at Jackson, Minn., June 28, and a lot next to the fairgrounds was used, where one performance, the matinee, was given to a big crowd. Turnaway business in the afternoon and capacity at night was the fare in Madison, S.D., June 29, and two good houses came out at Hawarden, Iowa. Performance notes had it that Kate and Tom Smith are presenting an excellent dog, pony, monkey, Russian wolfhound number, while Mabel Ward, aerialist, and the Joe Hodgini troupe of riders are scoring.

With a little over two months of the 1928 route completed Robbins Bros. continued to roll up good money with the take so far one of the best ever for the show.

Additional Iowa stands on this the third visit to the home state so far in the season came at Ida Grove, Audubon, Denison, Belle Plain, and Tipton, and then it was another visit to Illinois with initial date at Morrison, July 7. Following an off Sunday the show was at Elgin, Ill., July 9, where Mrs. Manny (Bessie) Gunn fell during an iron jaw act, and was badly injured. A *Billboard* reporter also visited the show at Elgin and this story appeared in the July 21, 1928 *Billboard*.

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS PRESENTS SPLENDID SHOW. The Robbins Bros. Circus, which has been do-

ing excellent business thru Iowa and Illinois was visited at Elgin, July 9, by Chicago representatives of *The Billboard*, who spent a very pleasant afternoon visiting with the showfolks, and who enjoyed the performance that marks this year's show the best that Fred Buchanan has ever had—and he has had some mighty good ones.

"The Robbins outfit presents a pleasing appearance on the lot. The khaki big top—140 ft. with three 50 ft. middles—is something of a novelty and makes a pleasing contrast to the rest of the canvas, all of which is spic and span as if it were just out of quarters. The sideshow has a flashy banner line and Capt. John (Doc) Ogden has a lineup of real entertainers. In the big top everything is trim and orderly. Center, quarter, and side poles are painted attractively in red and blue; there is an attractive canopy above the stage where the spec is presented, and comfortable folding chairs grace the reserved seat section. Prof. O. A. Gilson's band makes a real flash in immaculate white duck suits. Ushers are all dressed in neat red suits with black trimming, and similar outfits are worn by the workmen. Ring stock is all in top notch condition.

"Opening with a colorful spec; Santa Claus in Fairyland, the show moves with snap and speed from start to finish. Professor Gilson's outfit dispenses some of the peppiest music to be heard on a circus lot. There are many clever acts with the show, but the outstanding features are the Joe Hodgini Family, in a comedy riding act that fully deserves the ovation it received, and Mabel Ward, aerialist, who does her amazing rollup to tremendous applause. The show closes with a patriotic spec, introducing famous episodes and characters of United States history, making a fitting climax to a classy show.

"The concert introduces some entertaining Wild West features.

"Appreciative comments on the excellence of the show were heard on all sides at the conclusion of the matinee. There was a surprisingly good house, the big top being almost filled. This is



Photo No. 11—South America tableau in Robbins Bros. parade at Parsons, Kan., July 24, 1928. Photo by Arthur Toeves (Joe Fleming Collection).

a remarkable showing when it is considered that the farmers are far behind with their work. Owner Fred Buchanan was highly pleased with the big turnout.

"Will Buchanan, general press representative, and F. Robert Saul, also of the press department, were kept busy during the afternoon greeting visitors. Walter Driver was a visitor from Chicago, Mother Corning was noticed on the lot, also W. A. Atkins. On the previous day there was considerable visiting by the folks of the Robbins show and Sells-Floto, the latter playing a Sunday date at Chicago Heights.

"Ed L. Brannan, formerly general agent of the Robbins Bros. Circus signed up at Elgin, Ill., July 9, to go in advance of the show."

The show left Elgin for its next stand at Princeton with the injured Bessie Gunn remaining behind in St. Joseph's Hospital. Mommouth, July 10, was the last Illinois stand and next the show moved back to Iowa for dates at Washington, Sigourney, Fairfield, Red Oak, and Shenandoah.

A number of new performers joined at Red Oak, Iowa, July 16, which included Bobby Cornett, formerly with Sells-Floto, Babe Carter and Myrtle Barnett of the John Robinson show, and Lillian Burson. Miss Cornett began working elephants with Peggy Marshall and riding a high-jumping horse while Misses Carter and Barnett appeared in swinging ladder and iron jaw numbers. Leaving the show were Marceline Montague, prima donna, and Jimmy Duffy, ticket seller, both to play fair dates.

The Aug. 4, 1928 *Billboard* said the show had a turnaway at the matinee and capacity house at Red Oak. Shenandoah, July 17, also saw big crowds as did Nebraska City, Neb. the following day. The street parade was broadcast over local radio stations in both towns. Two other Nebraska stands, Beatrice and Superior were

very profitable. The show moved into Kansas at Abilene, July 21, where the good takes of late continued. A final note said that Paul Barton, trainmaster, is making some fine time in the loading and unloading of the train.

Eleven additional stands in Kansas came next. The Aug. 11, 1928 *Billboard* noted that Robbins Bros. continues to do very good business all along the line and the Kansas stands of Emporia, Parsons, Ft. Scott, Paola, and Lawrence were all winners. Bert Rickman, equestrian director, presented for the first time in Ft. Scott, Kan., July 25, a rearranged version of his spec, Santa Claus in Fairyland, in which three new dance numbers are put on. Other performance items said that Orin E. Dops is offering a new clown number, "Famous Men in Mellonland," assisted by Chester Sherman, Charles Robinson and Ray Hays. The article mentioned that Robert Schiller has returned from a business trip to Ponca City and Oklahoma City, Okla. (In all probability Schiller visited the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch headquarters near Ponca City to arrange for purchase of the reserve seat ticket wagon which was put into use in Joplin, Mo. This will be covered later.)

The late Arthur Toevs caught the show at Parsons, Kan., July 24, and took photos, some of which are printed here.

The following week's *Billboard* told more of the Robbins tour of Kansas. The show had a good day at the ticket wagon in Marion, July 30, despite cold and rainy weather. At Eldorado the next day there were two big crowds in the face of opposition from other shows. Newton, Aug. 1, was a winner but at Pratt the following day the night show was called off due to an approaching wind and electrical storm. The final Kansas date at Liberal, Aug. 3, was a good stand for Robbins. The side show remained up after the con-

Photo No. 12—Two Hemispheres wagon in Robbins Bros. parade at Parsons, Kan., July 24, 1928. Photo by Arthur Toevs (Joe Fleming Collection).



cert that evening and did fine business.

The route next took the show into Oklahoma for a single stand at Guymon, Aug. 4, and the trade publications reported it was a good one. That day Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Bonheur visited. Twenty years ago they had owned and operated Bonheur Bros. Circus, a large wagon show west of the Mississippi. Visitors noted that Nicholas Gallucci, female impersonator, was now singing second leads in the rearranged spec while Minnie Antzen has the leading role. Kenneth Waite's new number, Joys of Circus Life, is going over for a big hit.

After the date in Oklahoma the show returned immediately to Kansas to play Dodge City, Elkhart, Kinsley, Larned, Lyons, and Kingman, then moved back into Oklahoma at Shattuck, Aug. 13, followed by Alva the following day. Typical Buchanan routing continued for several more days with the show at Anthony, Kan., Aug. 15, Ponca City, Okla., 16th, Winfield, Kan., 17th, Eureka, Kan., 18th, then after a Sunday run on into Missouri with initial stand coming at Joplin, Aug. 20.

The Aug. 25, 1928 *Billboard* had a most interesting article on Fred Buchanan and his plans for the future as well as background sketches of many of his personnel. The complete article was as follows:

"FRED BUCHANAN HAS BIG PLANS. Fred Buchanan, owner of the Robbins Bros. Circus, announced some big plans for his show next year. An enlarged organization of about 35 cars will be put out with a new Oriental spec, written and arranged by Equestrian Director Bert Rickman; musical innovations by O. A. Gilson and a bunch of new acts to be engaged abroad by Fred and Will Buchanan when they visit Europe next December.

"Fred Buchanan, already has surrounded himself with some of the best department heads in the circus world. Two unique and famous characters of the American white tops, Ed Hopkins, master mechanic and superintendent of the side shows, and Pat Casey, boss

canvasman and mechanic, who now has the distinction of being the first boss canvasman in the world with an automobile show traveling with a circus, are both members of the Robbins staff this season. Then there are R. M. Harvey, traffic manager; Ed L. Brannan, local contractor; Will Buchanan; James (Whitie) Morse, formerly an attorney in Detroit and later legal adjuster with the Yankee Robinson and Rhoda Royal circuses; Charles Meyers, treasurer, in charge of all concessions and privileges at Ingersoll Park and later at Riverview Park, Des Moines, and for 20 seasons treasurer of the old Yankee Robinson Show; John Schiller, once cashier of the First National Bank of Chicago, later hotel owner and still later secretary to Jerry Mugivan; Robert Schiller, assistant manager, who for years owned hotels in Akron, Kenton, Canton, Marion and Cleveland, Ohio, who also formerly owned with his brother John a wagon show and later a railroad show. Robert Buchanan, Dartmouth College graduate, formerly feature writer with *The Chicago American* and *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*; Lonnie Buchanan, former city editor of Eastern papers, who is now superintendent of privileges, and F. Robert Saul, college man, ex-college football player, newspaper man of wide experience and who was press agent and business manager of some of the big amusement attractions on the road, including Hi Henry's two-car minstrels."

Other Missouri dates came at Monett, Springfield, Lamar, Butler, Warrensburg, Lexington, Slaton, Fulton, Louisiana, and Memphis. The Sept. 8, 1928 *Billboard* told of the

Photo No. 13—A featured act in the Robbins Bros. performance for several seasons was Tom and Kate Smith's trained dogs, ponies, monkeys, and Russian wolfhounds. This shot shows the wolfhounds in hitch pulling a miniature stage coach with monkey driver. Mrs. Smith is in center. Tarp covered France tableau is in left background. This photo was taken in 1929. Joe Rettinger Collection.



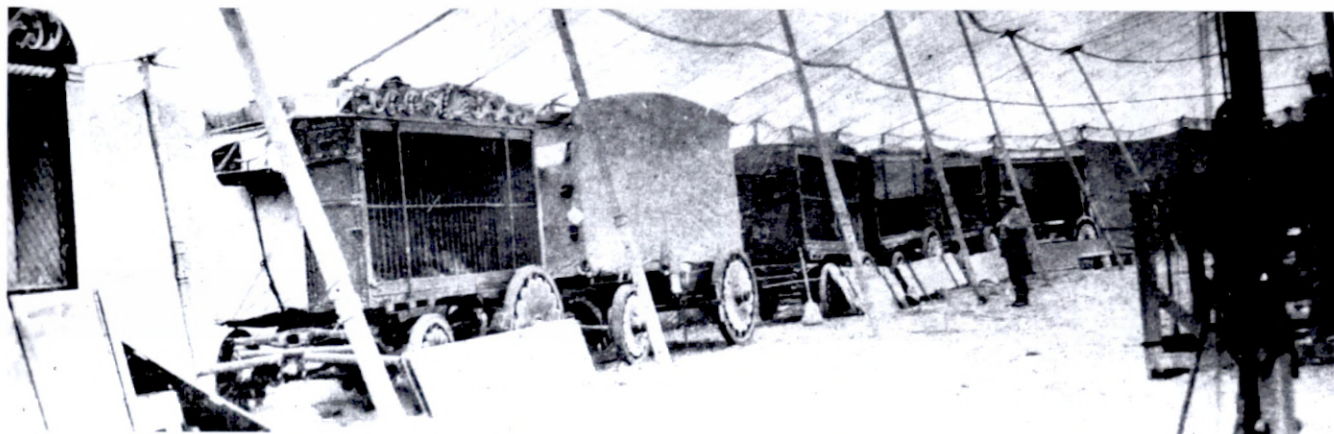


Photo No. 16—Cages inside Robbins Bros. menagerie tent about 1928. Manny Gunn Collection (Joe Rettinger).

show's happenings during this time. The report said that Robbins Bros. was enjoying good business in Missouri. At Springfield, where it had rained the night previous and kept up until 10 a.m., leaving the uptown lot, where the circus was booked, covered with water, the show was forced to break in a new lot three miles from the center of town. At Joplin, Aug. 20, the beautiful new all white, gold-leaf trimmed reserved seat ticket wagon was used. Secretary Les G. Minger is handling the pasteboards in the new wagon. It was mentioned that O. A. Gilson's big show band is one of the prime features of the Robbins circus. Bandmaster Gilson was planning to lead a 30 piece band in the parks of Tampa, Fla. during the coming winter season. The band to be called the Gilsonians will be the official city band.

The new reserve seat ticket wagon mentioned in the article was purchased from the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show which had advertised it for sale along with numerous other wagons and properties in the Feb. 4, 1928 *Billboard*. In all probability the show purchased and took possession of the wagon when it played Ponca City, Okla. located near the 101 quarters four days earlier on August 16. The off Sunday prior to the Joplin stand would have given ample time to get the wagon all set up for business. Unfortunately, no photo of this ticket wagon in use on Robbins Bros. turns up until the 1931 season. The wagon has a most interesting history being formerly on the Barnum & Bailey and Buffalo Bill Wild West Shows. Fred Dahlinger had a great article in the Jan.-Feb. 1982 *Bandwagon* covering the history of this and other ticket wagons.

As the show neared the end of the summer many Robbins performers began making their plans for winter work following the close of the season. The *Billboard* said that Orin E. Dops will open his musical comedy, "Honeymoon Time in Spangleland,"

in Kansas City after the Robbins season is concluded. He will play the principal comedy role and will be assisted by other Robbins performers, Chester Sherman, Nate Leon, and George White. Tracey Andrews and Charles Robinson will do the male leads, while Mildred Norcross, Marceline Montague, and Alice Alverson will fill the principal feminine roles. New wardrobe, electrical effects, scenery and a company of 40 will be carried on the planned route of big cities. F. Robert Saul will be business manager ahead.

The Sept. 15, 1928 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. continued to get good business on its swing through Missouri. The take was fine at Lexington, Slater, Fulton, Louisiana, and Memphis. Performance notes had it that Walter Laedeka was now a member of the wild west dept. and his

trick and fancy riding is making a hit. Some recent visitors to the show over the past few weeks included Col. Zack Mulhall of wild west fame who once tramped on the Buffalo Bill Show with Lulu Parr, currently with Robbins, and also George Miller of the 101 Ranch Wild West show. Crazy Ray Choisser who played the steam calliope on Robbins Bros. is also in charge of the pass gate.

After Missouri the show returned once more to Iowa to play Centerville, Sept. 1, where good crowds attended and also Burlington on Labor Day, Sept. 3, following a Sunday layoff. There was a capacity matinee on the big holiday and a good house in the evening. Then the show moved over into Illinois at Beardstown where there was only a light matinee but good evening crowd. Three additional stands in the state were played then it was back into Iowa for Clinton, Sept. 8, and afterwards a return to Illinois for 8 dates.

The Sept. 22, 1928 *Billboard* noted

Photo No. 18—Robbins Bros. last carried the Forepaugh Lion chariot steam calliope during the 1928 season. This shot taken in 1926 showing the wagon jacked

up with a rear wheel removed for repairs could have either been made at the Granger quarters or at some stand along the route. Joe Rettinger Collection.



the 20th week of the Robbins route was a good one. The red-letter day of the week was at Jacksonville, Ill., Sept. 5, where a number were turned away at the matinee and people were on the ground at night. It was only a fair matinee at Lincoln, Ill. but good house at night. Havana, Ill. was big at both performances while Clinton, Ill. was a real winner with a turnaway at the matinee and good crowd in the evening. Several notations concerning the performance were given. Helen Morse, Bobby Cornett and others of the riding act are features of the show. Capt. Dutch Schultz has two new assistants in his elephant act—Bobby Cornett and Jessie Mildred. Jack Burslem, wire walker, is doing some fine work on the wire. Gene Tartar, clown, joined at Burlington, Iowa. He has formed a partnership with George White and they will have a vaudeville skit, in which there will be 12 people, in a comedy, singing, dancing and acrobatic act this winter. Gladys Bunker and her dancing ballet girls are presenting two classy numbers in the opening spec under the direction of Mary Rickman who wrote the words. O. A. Gilson arranged the music for the numbers. In conclusion the report said that Crazy Ray, the steam calliope player, is attracting plenty of attention along the parade route and his six o'clock evening concerts on the lot are scoring.

More performers and staff additions were announced a week later. Beatrice Lillian Scott, aerialist, and Mabel and Adelaide Murphy, trapeze performers joined the show at Pana, Ill., Sept. 10. Ruby and A. H. Bailey joined at Havana, Ill., Sept. 6, and are now members of Col. Frank Fleming's wild west department doing trick and fancy riding and rifle shooting. Nick Gallucci, female impersonator, is now appearing in the Hodgini riding act. George Steele, well-known legal adjuster, is a member of the Robbins staff.

Photo No. 17—Inside Robbins Bros. ring stock tent about 1928. Manny Gunn Collection (Joe Rettinger).



The Sept. 29, 1928 *Billboard* said the 21st week of the season for Robbins Bros. was a profitable one. Good takes were registered in Illinois: Olney, Pana, Hillsboro, Charleston, Paris, and Robinson. It was quite a celebration in Paris, Ill., Sept. 13, at Joe Hodgini Jr.'s 5th birthday party. It was held under the big top following the afternoon performance. Joe Jr. rode the family horse, "Prince," in the center of the big top while O. A. Gilson's band played "The Victors." Peggy Poole's pit show and Doc Ogden's sideshow have been doing very good business of late. Bert Rickman has introduced a new feature in the opening spec, Gene Lewis, in a dancing number entitled "Moonbeams."

The September 1928 issue of *The White Tops* printed the reports of several fans who had recently seen Robbins Bros. One interesting bit gave additional information about the auto show Robbins was carrying this season. At each stand there is a Chevrolet auto show staged in a separate tent on the midway where local dealers and district sales managers co-operate with the circus in providing the automobiles. A sideshow type bannerline is erected in front of the tent and inside all models are on display. Admission is free. Another item says that Fred Buchanan believes the day of small circuses is passing and wouldn't be surprised that his own show, now on 30 cars, is quite a good deal larger next season. Also one report mentioned that the Robbins closing pageant, Historic America, where historical characters are brought forth, of late they have introduced into the spec the two current presidential candidates, Herbert Hoover and Al Smith. The man doing Smith has a great make-up and likeness. The applause is interesting and is a real poll indicator, says Buchanan, for if ever there is a mixed audience it is in the circus.

Following the Illinois tour the show went eastward again into Indiana for its second tour of that state. Dates

were played at Mt. Vernon, Evansville, Washington, and Seymour. The Keeman Sisters, Opal, Dolly, Belle, and Mary joined the show in Seymour, Sept. 22, and in addition to appearing in the regular program also were featured in a new dance in the opening spec. Next the show moved southward into Kentucky with stands scheduled for Louisville, Lebanon, Glasgow, Bowling Green, and Hopkinsville. A tour of Tennessee began at Springfield, Sept. 29.

The Oct. 6, 1928 *Billboard* carried a very interesting eyewitness account of Robbins Bros. It read as follows:

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS HAS VERY GOOD PROGRAM. Steve J. Henry, who saw the Robbins Bros. Circus for the first time at Louisville, Ky., Sept. 24, writes that it is a most pretentious organization and that he was surprised at the layout. The street parade was unusually attractive, the stock looked very good for this time of year and several tableau wagons added to the appearance of the parade. The big top of khaki material presented a nice appearance as did the red material sewed on ropes and elsewhere. The show has a grand stand and platforms with high back chairs.

"The opening spec, Santa Claus in Fairyland, went over big with the audience, especially that part that had for its theme the Mother Goose rhymes. The closing spec, which dealt with epochs in American history, was given with most careful attention to detail. The noted characters introduced were finely drawn. The introduction of Al Smith and Herbert Hoover was worked out in a novel manner.

"The performance is a bit unusual, that is in the order in which the program is presented. It is a most pleasing and diversified one. The high spots were the Joe Hodgini troupe of riders (in addition to his capable

Photo No. 19—Robbins Bros. elephants in parade. This photo was taken at Beatrice, Neb., Aug. 6, 1926. Joe Rettinger Collection.





Photo No. 21—South America tableau on the Robbins Bros. lot about 1928. Joe Bradbury (Melvin) Collection.

riding, Joe is a good comedian); Mabel Ward, aerialist; Ligazeed troupe of Arabs and the Matsumodo Jap troupe. The band under the direction of O. A. Gilson, scored.

"John E. (Doc) Ogden has a nice lineup of attractions in the side show and is doing very nicely. Doc says he expects to winter in Columbus, Ohio.

"The writer had a long talk with Fred and Will Buchanan, whom he had not seen in several years, and also met F. Robert Saul, the press agent back with the show. R. M. Harvey was on the lot. Dan Hoffman, who was general agent until he underwent an operation, came down from Logansport, Ind., it being his first trip since he left the show. He is looking fine and is walking, with little difficulty. He has discarded his crutches. George D. Steele is connected with the banner solicitation department and is doing very good.

"Business at Louisville was fair in the afternoon, with a well-filled house at night."

The Oct. 13, 1928 *Billboard* covered the current Robbins route as it ventured into new territory in Kentucky for the show. The account said that the 23rd week of the season had been a good one as some new spots were played. In Louisville the *Courier-Journal* commented favorably on the parade and performance. Lebanon, Sept. 25, was the poorest day of the week. Glasgow, Ky. was big and Bowling Green proved to be a pleasant surprise with a huge matinee and turn-away at night. The red letter day was Hopkinsville, Ky., Sept. 28, where the circus played day and date with the Johnny J. Jones Exposition (large railroad carnival). Capacity was registered at both performances. Springfield, Tenn., Sept. 29 saw a turnaway in the afternoon and big night house. Other notes in the article said that H. B. Gentry, formerly one of the owners of the Gentry Bros. Show and Roy Feltus, old-time press agent with Barnum & Bailey were

guests of Fred Buchanan at Washington, Ind. Other recent visitors came from the Floyd and Howard King owned, Gentry Bros. circus and the Mighty Haag show. A final note said that the main topic of conversation around the show the past month has been the 35 car show which Mr. Buchanan will have on the road next season.

In early October it was announced that several Robbins Bros. performers have signed contracts with Dennie Curtis to appear at the Shrine circuses in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Detroit, and Cleveland during the coming winter. These included the Joe Hodgini family of riders; Mabel Ward, aerialist; Georgia Jones, Lillian Burslem and Gladys Bunker, iron-jaw performers; Kenneth R. Waite and 10 joeys.

Other Tennessee stands played included Nashville, Lebanon, Mufreesboro, Tullahoma, Fayetteville, Columbia, Clarksville, Paris, and Humbolt. Then the show went into Illinois for a single date at Cairo, Oct. 11, which was followed by four dates booked in Missouri: Sikeston, Kennett, Cape Girardeau, and Poplar Bluff.

The October 27, 1928 *Billboard* said that the 25th week of the season had been a good one. A pleasant event was the day and date with the Royal American Shows (large railroad carnival) at Cairo, Ill., October 11. Both shows enjoyed good business that day and many visits were exchanged between troupers of the two organizations. Performance notes said that Pat King, Henry Bedow, midget, Tracy Andrews and Johnny Delmar are putting on a black face comedy clown number called "Watermelon Vines" and introducing songs, dances, and acrobatic numbers. One of the main features of the big show performance continues to be the closing historical spectacle which is the principal work of Fred Buchanan.

A later report said that Robbins Bros. found the lot it was to use in Poplar Bluff, Mo., Oct. 16, in such bad shape from a two day rain that it was impossible to show. The cookhouse was set up and personnel fed before the decision was made to blow the



Photo No. 22—Great Britain tableau on the Robbins Bros. lot about 1928. Joe Bradbury (Melvin) Collection.

stand and move on to Newport, Ark. scheduled for the following day. Other Arkansas stands came at Searcy, Morrilton, Clarksville, Paris, Ft. Smith, Rogers, and Fayetteville.

The Nov. 10, 1928 *Billboard* proclaimed Robbins business during its 26th week to have continued on its high level of late. Contracting agents, Manny Gunn and A. Russell Hervey, visited on the lot for three days after completing their season's duties then left for their homes. The Candy Club of the padroom closed its social activities of the season in Ft. Smith, Ark., Oct. 23, with a midnight banquet at the town's leading hotel. Some 60 guests were present for a 6 course dinner which was followed by dancing. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Buchanan, Will T., and Bob Buchanan, and A. R. Hervey were honored guests. O. A. Gilson's Silver Quartet played special numbers and Minnie Atzen sang several selections.

The show moved into Oklahoma at Poteau, Oct. 26, which was followed by Antlers the next day. After a Sunday run the show gave its final performances of the 1928 season at Idabel, Okla. on October 29. Then came the final railroad move of the year to the winterquarters in Granger, Iowa. According to the route furnished the author by the late E. W. Adams back in 1955, five more dates had been booked by Robbins in Oklahoma and Texas but these were cancelled by Buchanan when bad weather moved into that area. Adams also commented that the season had been very successful for the show, probably close to the record take of 1927.

The Nov. 17, 1928 *Billboard* had an article headed "POST CLOSING NOTES OF ROBBINS CIRCUS" and said the show which closed the season at Idabel, Okla., Oct. 29, had been the most successful in Fred Buchanan's career. (Author's note: E. W. Adams, former trouper with wide knowledge of the circus world, was probably cor-

rect in stating 1927 to have been the best). Fifteen states were covered and the total mileage was 12,797. Fred Ballenger manager of the No. 1 car, and Ed C. Reid, special brigade agent, dropped back at Antler, Okla., spending two days in conference with Mr. Buchanan and riding the show train into quarters at Granger. The remainder of the article was devoted to giving the destination of the troupers, many of whom were engaged for indoor circuses or other branches of show business during the coming winter. A separate report said that O. A. Gilson had signed a contract to again handle the big show band next season. Gilson said he had changed his plans for the winter and instead of having his band in Tampa, Fla. he will take a jazz band of 12 pieces on the road, opening in Detroit at an early date. It will be known as Gilson's California Gondoliers.

In late November Buchanan announced that he had negotiated with General Motors officials after a conference in Detroit for the automobile show to be carried with his circus again in 1929.

The Dec. 8, 1928 *Billboard* said that Mrs. Bessie Gunn who was injured in Elgin, Ill., July 11, while performing with Robbins Bros. is getting along nicely in St. Joseph's Hospital in that city. She is able to be taken outside in good weather. Another item remarked that about the first thing Judd Muckle did on his return to the Granger quarters was to prepare a fine Thanksgiving dinner. The Robbins Hotel (name applied to the quarters bunkhouse for personnel) was appropriately decorated and a fine menu served.

No further reports came from Granger during the remainder of the year. The Dec. 29, 1928 *Billboard* carried this advertisement:

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Wanted for the Big Show—Three Prima Donnas, Young Ladies for Iron Jaw, Ballet Girls, Menage Riders, Animal Trainers, Jumping Horse Riders, Cowgirls, Cowboys, Cossacks, Novelty Acts. Big Show Performers address: Bert E. Rickman, Equestrian Director, Granger, Iowa. WANTED for Winter Quarters—Harness Maker, Blacksmith, Painters, Wood Workers. Address: W. E. Sinnott, Supt., Granger, Iowa."

Nothing further appeared in the trade publications concerning the heavily rumored plans of Buchanan to enlarge his circus for 1929 so the circus world would have to wait until after the new year for positive information as to what would actually develop. In the Pfening collection is a most interesting letter written on a sheet with a letterhead reading ROBBINS BROS. 4 Ring Wild Animal CIRCUS United With Ponca Bill's Wild

West, and signed by F. Robert Saul, Press Representative. It was addressed to "Dear Friends" and was originally from the Karl Knecht files so evidently it had gone to Knecht, a prominent circus fan of that time. It was dated Dec. 19, 1928. The letter read as follows:


"Was some surprised and really delighted to receive your more than unique, novel, and highly interesting Christmas Greetings. You certainly are to be congratulated on this original design.

"So glad that you and yours are so friendly to me and that you all enjoyed my route cards during the past season as I enjoy sending them to real interested friends, whom I consider real circus fans.

"Robbins Bros. Circus enjoyed one of its best seasons during the past summer, and Colonel Fred Buchanan is certainly a mighty lucky man to have such success in an off presidential "election year," when other shows were losing money every day. The first three weeks out during our invasion of the big cities of Illinois and Indiana the show cleared over Fifty Thousand Dollars right in the 'heart of Jerry's [Jerry Mugivan] territory.' Jerry and Fred who have not been friends ever since that Yankee Robinson episode became very chummy when Jerry spent three days with us in Terre Haute, Springfield, Illinois, and Logansport, Ind. Jerry told Fred that if he had Robbins Bros. outfit and its performance he could make more money with Robbins Bros., than all of his shows put together.

"There has been all kinds of rumors during the past three seasons that Col Buchanan was to have the Forepaugh-Sells Bros. title with a forty car show playing big cities, but no one knows when this may develop. Will Buchanan, general press agent, told me personally this fall that he (Will) had secured the use of the title for Fred. John Schiller, auditor, told while we were in Tennessee this fall that they had all the plans to make use of that title with a 40 car show next season. But I shall believe it when I see it on the paper, cars, and wagons. . ."

The above letter which mentions that Buchanan had plans to use the Forepaugh-Sells title on an enlarged show in 1929 is the only time the author has ever heard this mentioned. It is interesting to note that even F. Robert Saul, who was actually with Robbins Bros. had his own serious doubts and wouldn't believe it until it came about. Possibly Buchanan did have some conversations with John Ringling about the Forepaugh-Sells title. In any event the plan never materialized nor did the plan to enlarge to a 35 or 40 car show. Robbins Bros. would continue in 1929 on 30 cars. For readers who might not

OFFICIAL ROUTE			
ROBBINS BROS CIRCUS			
WINTER QUARTERS, GRANGER, IOWA			
SEASON 1928			
NO. 24			
Date	Town	R. R.	Miles
Oct. 1	Nashville, Tenn.	L. & N.	30
Oct. 2	Lebanon, Tenn.	N. C. & St. L.	31
Oct. 3	Murfreesboro, Tenn.	N. C. & St. L.	63
Oct. 4	Tullahoma, Tenn.	N. C. & St. L.	48
Oct. 5	Fayetteville, Tenn.	N. C. & St. L.	52
Oct. 6	Columbia, Tenn.	N. C. & St. L.	48
SUNDAY			
Oct. 8	Clarksville, Tenn.	L. & N.	111
Oct. 9	Paris, Tenn.	L. & N.	70
Oct. 10	Humboldt, Tenn.	L. & N.	49
Oct. 11	Cairo, Ill.	M. & O.	99
Oct. 12	Sikeston, Mo.	Mo. Pac.	83
Oct. 13	Kennett, Mo.	Frisco	65
SUNDAY			
Oct. 15	Cape Girardeau, Mo.	Frisco	90
Total Mileage			10,881
By F. ROBERT SAUL			
Press Representative			
			

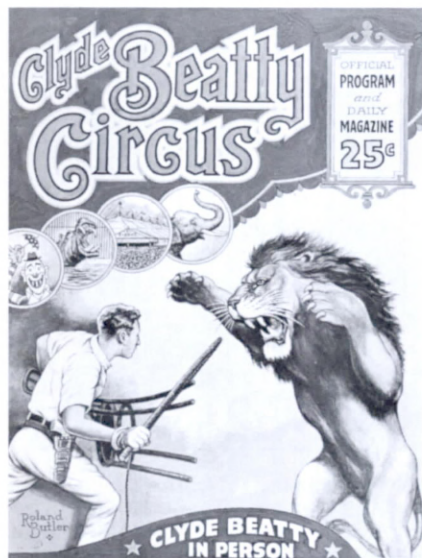
understand the bit in the above letter that Jerry Mugivan and Fred Buchanan had not been friends since the Yankee Robinson episode, this further explanation is given. Mugivan and his partner, Bert Bowers, purchased the Yankee Robinson Circus which Buchanan had operated in 1920 at the conclusion of that season. William P. Hall acted as agent for Mugivan and Bowers in the transaction and the Yank show was delivered to them at the Hall Farm in Lancaster, Mo. when it finished out its route. Anyway, when the properties arrived in Lancaster it was discovered that Buchanan had "held out" (as the late Col. W. H. Woodcock once described it) certain pieces of equipment, notably the air calliope, as well as wardrobe and harness. Mugivan complained for years that Buchanan had "skinned" him on the deal.

With the close of 1928 Buchanan had now put in six seasons during his "second" career as a circus owner. His 15 car show in 1923 had doubled in size to 30 and he had just completed another very profitable season. Only Ringling-Barnum boasted of a circus utilizing more cars than his. The American Circus Corporation owned by Mugivan, Bowers, and Ballard did have three shows on the road, but none of their individual circuses moved on any more cars than did Buchanan's Robbins Bros.—30. So far the mid and late 20's had been most kind to old Colonel Buchanan.

Postnote: During the various installments of this series we try and use illustrations taken during that particular season but since so few actually taken in 1928 have turned up we are using a few from other Robbins Bros. seasons so as to fill out the usual number printed. Each illustration's caption will contain the proper date.

Roland Butler's Last Painting

by Dave Price



The original Roland Butler painting for the 1957 program. Its subtle shadings do not show up well in this black and white photo. Price Collection.

The life and career of Roland Butler up until the time he resigned from the Ringling show are well known. His last years are not so well documented in circus lore. This is the story of his last color work.

Butler did a number of pen-and-inks for the Beatty show newspaper ads



during the McClosky-Kernan era. His eyes were in bad shape by this time, so he didn't attempt any great detail, just simple bold-stroke sketches, mostly clown faces and the like. Naturally the originals were done much larger than the final one- and two-column ads as they appeared in newspapers. Drawing them at that size would have been too much of a strain on the eyes.

After the title was changed to Beatty-Cole in 1959, Floyd King sent the originals back to Butler who relettered them. Some were in use for many years after Butler's death.

During the winter of 1956-57, Butler was asked to do a color painting for the cover of the souvenir program. This work turned out to be his last major design. He chose to feature Clyde Beatty and a lion in the painting. The profile of Beatty was inspired by a still from "The Big Cage," a movie that Beatty had starred in many years earlier. This same figure of Beatty was also used by Butler in a newspaper ad and on a letterhead design which is still in use today.

For the lion, Butler copied a beautiful 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace litho. This 1934 bill, by the way, was not done by Butler although it has been mistakenly attributed to him. The 1934 design had been lifted almost intact by Forrest Freeland in the late 1940's when he redrew the poster for use with the Beatty title.

The painting was done in tempera paints on artists' cardboard and measures 16½ by 21½ inches. Butler was under the impression that the cover was to be reproduced through the color-separation process so he did a wonderful job using skillful color shadings. The finished product fully lived up to the Butler reputation.

In the Butler papers at the Circus World Museum is a letter to the artist from Floyd King, dated March 6, 1957. On the new Clyde Beatty Circus letterhead designed by Butler, King wrote:

The drawing for the Clyde Beatty program cover arrived this morning. The brass okayed it in a big way and it is now enroute via express to Harry Anderson.

Roland, I know beyond a doubt this is the outstanding of all program covers and I know it will create a lot of talk among all.

This 1934 litho, often mistakenly attributed to Butler, inspired his 1957 Beatty program design. Price Collection.

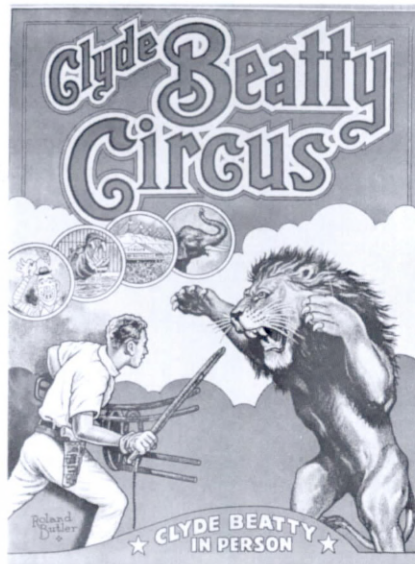


The 1957-58 program cover. The reader will notice a less delicate effect than the original painting. Price Collection.

Frank McClosky was greatly pleased with it. And you know he is not given to praise. Walter [Kernan] liked it greatly.

I am going to see if I can get your bill taken care of now.

This 1958 litho is in use today. The title has been updated and Beatty's name at the bottom has been replaced by the wording "World's Largest Circus." Price Collection.





In 1960 the CHS secured proofs of each of the four color plates of the 1957 program cover from the Enquirer Printing Co., who had reproduced the original Butler painting in line drawings. The result was the first four color cover to appear on the *Bandwagon*.

A careful examination of the Butler papers uncovered no mention of Butler's charges for any of his artwork for the Beatty show.

Much to Butler's dismay, the show owners decided to use a less expensive method of reproduction whereby a

staff artist in the printing plant traced the original with pen and ink, making a separate tracing for each of the four colors needed. A plate was made from each tracing and the finished program cover was printed in four colors but in poorer quality than the color-separation process would have produced.

The program cover was used in 1957 and 1958 and when the show called on Butler to do a cover with the Beatty-Cole title in 1959, he produced a pen-and-ink for their use. It was printed by the same method used before so that a color program resulted from black-and-white originals.

In 1958, Enquirer Printing Company issued a litho for the show using the 1957 design. This poster was retitled Beatty-Cole in 1959 but the 1958 supply was used until exhausted. The litho is still in use today to advertise Dave Hoover's act although Hoover's name is not shown.

In March, 1960 the 1957 Butler design was used in creating a special cover for *Bandwagon*. Floyd King loaned the staff artist's pen-and-ink drawings for the purpose. By that time, he had forgotten (or perhaps just neglected to mention) the tracing method so it was assumed the drawings were Butler originals.

For that cover the word 'Bandwagon' was lettered similar to the Butler lettering (a modified "Thalia" style). If you look at the cover of this issue, you will see that the lettering is being used to this day.

Wallace and Al G. Barnes show as part of his overall responsibility as head of the Ringling press staff. King's admiration of Butler's artwork had begun many years before.

It was natural that King would turn to Butler for title cuts and newspaper ads when he operated his first truck circus in 1946. The famous King Bros. letterhead on pink paper, printed in red, black and gold and first used in 1946 looks much like Butler's style. It, however, was not drawn by Butler, but was rehased from one originally designed and used by Cole Bros. as their first letterhead in 1935.

The King show did not publish a program in 1946, but a fine program was used in 1947 with a full color painting of a girl on horseback on the cover. This program cover art was done by Roland Butler. The same design was used the next season.

The King title changed to King-Cristiani in 1952, and Butler furnished a new letterhead, newspaper ad designs and a program cover.

After leaving the Ringling show for the last time in 1954, the artist had the time for more independent work. On May 5, 1956, Bill Woodcock, who had been buying circusions from Butler's lists, wrote him:

About a letterhead for my elephant operation—let's take it very easy, and no hurry or eye-strain. Let's keep in mind a florid design at 2 colors—5000 sheets and 2500 envelopes. No cuts from photos on this. With your knowledge of such matters, can you give me a guess as to a price? Let's say same lettering as on this sheet [one designed by Chappie Fox for Miller and Woodcock's Elephants] plus maybe an oval in center containing sketch of a big pyramid of elephants (something like early RBBB heralds) with small elephant standing atop a big bull in center and ample scroll. Above isn't definite and I am open to your alternate suggestion; and FINALLY I do not want to be a nuisance. Sorry you have eye trouble.

At the bottom of the Woodcock let-

Roland Butler's Last Pen and Ink Drawings

As indicated in the preceding article Roland Butler's eyes had begun to give him serious problems by the mid-1950's. He did continue, however, to produce a number of additional outstanding drawings for a variety of shows and individuals, even though the artist himself felt his work was inferior compared to earlier offerings.

In 1957, Floyd King enlisted Butler to do a full set of newspaper ads for the new motorized Clyde Beatty Circus. The artist had done one ad in 1956 for Beatty before he lost the show.

On March 13, 1957, King wrote: "We received the proofs back from the engraver at Daytona Beach for the ad slugs and they are splendid. Both Walter [Kernan] and Frank [McCloskey] agree with me that there is no one else who can even attempt to approach your work. Needless to say you are all time tops in their book." Butler also designed a new letterhead for the show.

Butler's association with Kernan and McCloskey was long standing, having worked together on the Ringling-Barnum show for many

years. All left the Greatest Show on Earth in 1945 for Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus. The three later returned to Ringling.

Floyd King had worked in the press department of the Al G. Barnes Circus in the middle 1930's. At the time Butler supervised the publicity departments of the Hagenbeck-

This 1956 Christmas card was one of the first pieces of art done for the new owners of the Beatty show. It is printed on a blotter. Pfening Collection.





ter Butler had jotted, "letterhead quote, drawing \$25, printing \$92.50 and cuts \$25.00, total \$142.50."

An additional note at the bottom of the Woodcock letter, added by Butler says, "Leonard was \$40 for drawing and \$138.75 for printing, total \$178.75." This note refers to a letterhead he did for Arthur "Hardtimes" Leonard's Leonard Bros. Circus in the spring of 1956. Leonard had purchased the equipment of the ill fated Fred J. Mack Circus which had toured the prior year under the ownership of a group of Columbus, Ohio businessmen, including the author.

By June 21, 1956, Woodcock had begun making payments on his new letterhead. In a letter of that date he states:

The letterhead is considerably more than I can afford, but I will be dead and gone ere long and better have a little fun while I can, so go ahead with it. Enclosed money order covers the \$25 for the drawing, and I will come along with the balance presently. Spare your eyes, by all means. Let's take it easy on this and figure on not having the stationery in circulation before late Autumn. How does that sound?

The design is what I had in mind, alright. You have pointed out that this is just a rough

All of the Butler letterhead designs done by the artist from 1956 until his death in 1961 are shown here. Pfening Collection.

sketch, and I knew the end result will have the line Miller & Woodcock centered up better.

In another 1956 letter Woodcock brought up a subject of discussion among circusiana collectors at the time. In the lists of circus materials Butler published in the mid-1950's was a selection of early American circus letterheads. A total of 21 different designs were offered, including such titles as S. H. Barrett & Co., 1883; W. H. Harris Nickle Plate, 1895; D. W. Stone, 1878; and G. F. Bailey & Co., 1866. The letterpaper was listed in mint condition and was priced at a few dollars each.

Sophisticated collectors at the time questioned how such quantities of rare letterheads could have been uncovered. Bill Woodcock asked Butler where he acquired them, and conjectured that they came from overruns that had gathered dust for years in some show print house. Butler's answer to Woodcock's query, if he gave one, has not been preserved.

Nevertheless, Woodcock accepted their authenticity, and on August 2, 1956 wrote Butler:

There has been some question in the minds of certain collectors as to the genuineness of the

old sheets you offer, because we haven't too much of this very old letter paper, and they have in mind the florid stationery that came later. I have tried to correct the Doubting Thomases wherever I have encountered this opinion. Comparison of your stuff with letterheads that I have just mentioned demonstrates that yours are not fakes.

A few years ago, John Polacsek analysed the watermark on one of these old lettersheets, and discovered it had not been used prior to the late 1940's, let alone the 1860's or 1870's. So Col. Woodcock had been hoodwinked by the master artist. But he was not the only one as Butler had wholesaled a job lot of them to A. Morton Smith, a well known Gainesville, Texas circusiana dealer. Smith too offered them in his lists as the real thing. One can only wonder why a person of Butler's stature would attempt to pull off a hoax of this magnitude.

In any case Bill Woodcock started using his new Miller & Woodcock Peerless Performing Elephants letterhead in September 1956, and by the 1960's had his own doubts if the 19th century letter paper was original.

Around 1956 the author became well acquainted with Roland Butler and made yearly visits to his home in Palmetto, Florida. A warm friendship developed and Butler became interested in the Circus Historical Society and the *Bandwagon*. During the late summer of 1957 Butler was asked to design a new letterhead for the CHS following the basic design of the King Bros.-Cristiani sheet. Butler produced the beautiful design that continues to be used on all CHS membership certificates. The author sent Butler a check for \$40 for this piece on November 23, 1957.

A recent examination of this original CHS letterhead art shows the technique he used in producing pen and ink multi-colored art work. The key black plate is done on bristol board twice the printed size. The red and gold plates are each on plastic overlays. A fourth overlay has the colors roughed in as instruction for the printer. Butler wrote notes on the various areas indicating such points as "tint of red on tiger" and "solid red background around the lettering."

The original art work for the 1956 Leonard Bros. Circus, also in the author's collection, is done the same way, but in this case the second color, orange, is shown in a rough overlay, as opposed to a second color plate.

Roland Butler became CHS member No. 690 in May of 1958, and continued his membership until his death.

Floyd King continued to use Butler in 1957 and 1958 for new newspaper

ads. A letter from King dated May 3, 1958 tells of the arrival of new ads. King writes:

The drawings for the newspaper ads arrived Monday and I took them right down to the Western Newspaper Union here (New York). They know you well there. But after talking to the foreman he said they were short on some of the type styles, so I air mailed copy and drawings to their Chicago office, and Wednesday got back the first proof. The ad in which I use Berosoni, Beatty and Zacchini drawings is OUT OF THIS WORLD.

In the spring of 1959, Butler drew a new letterhead using the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. title. He also produced a new program cover which was used each year through the 1970 season.

In early 1959, a new circus was planned by Charles Higgins of Montclair, New Jersey. The general agent, James Allen Winters, engaged Butler to design a letterhead as well as additional artwork for the new Downie Bros. Circus. On September 10th, Winters wrote Butler on the new stationery:

I am enclosing check for \$45.00 in payment for the drawings that were received today . . . to say that I am pleased with them would be an understatement . . . I think they are the best extant. Mr. Higgins will be in Florida within a few days regarding some equipment of the Ringling show which we bid on and will come by to see you.

A little later I will ask you to do some press releases for me . . . am now held up until we contract the acts that we want publicized. Press portfolios will be off the press end of this week and I will send you a couple for your files as I utilized some of your work.

This show never opened, but the letterhead design survived. James A. Winters joined Jack Moore's Carson & Barnes Circus, and found another artist who replaced the Downie name with Carson & Barnes. This design was used by Carson and Barnes for a number of years, and has since been used by the Circus Genoa, and to this day by the Martin & Downs show.

In 1960 Floyd King leased the King Bros. title to Benny and Remo Cristiani. While still employed full time by the Beatty-Cole organization, King moonlighted by helping the new King show owners with press material. He asked Butler to design a program cover for this show. Upon receipt of the art, King wrote:

King Bros. front page cover for their program arrived



The black key plate of the 1961 program shows the traditional Butler style. The original first used in 1959 had the wording "The Greatest Circus on Earth," in place of "World's Largest Circus." Pfening Collection.

Thursday morning via Railway Express, and went out the same way to Harry Anderson in Cincinnati . . . It was a splendid drawing and I believe will be a Knockout! Notice there is a sort of white panel in which is the title: KING BROS. CIRCUS, would it be possible for a white background around the title and in the panel to be yellow? Just an idea for a three color title effect.

The finished program did have yellow as a background for the title, with additional yellow on a tent and the tusks of an elephant. It is interesting to note that under the traditional Roland Butler signature in the lower left hand corner is the date "'47." This indicates that Butler pulled a piece of art off the shelf, completed thirteen years earlier, and adapted it for the 1960 King program.

He had done the same thing for King in 1952. A fine full color painting of a whiteface clown holding a miniature elephant appeared on the cover of the King-Cristiani program. In the Butler files is a photograph of this same cover painting with the title Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, dated 1948. The Ringling show elected to use a very contemporary modern art style painting of a whiteface clown by F. McKnight Kauffer on their 1948 program, rather than Butler's drawing. Kauffer also had designed some modernistic lithographs for Ringling in the mid-1940's.

These examples of Butler rehashing art done years before indicates his eye

problems would not allow him to turn out the quality of work he had done in prior years.

In 1960, he drew a new letterhead for the Beers-Barnes Circus, which was an original design. The next year he responded to Pete Cristiani's request with a letterhead for the Wallace Bros. Circus. Although it is printed in four colors it in no way compares with earlier work. The artist lettered the title and some scroll work, but used an old elephant head and tiger cut as the illustrations. The 1961 Wallace letterpaper, Butler's last, is a far cry from the beautiful art work he had done over the years.

Floyd King's last request to Butler was in the summer of 1961. The finished piece was a new Christmas card design for the Beatty-Cole Circus. It was the last art work done by Butler, who died on October 20, 1961.



The last piece of published Roland Butler art is this 1961 Christmas card. He had used a magnifying glass to accomplish the drawing shortly before his death. Pfening Collection.

Roland Childs Butler was truly the greatest commercial circus artist of all time. His artwork in newspaper ads, couriers, letterheads, lithographs and program covers was reproduced more than that of any other artist in circus history. During the period from 1921 when he joined the Sparks Circus until his death 40 years later in 1961, he flamboyantly told America the circus was coming.

This article drew heavily on letters in the Roland Butler papers at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

TOM MIX BOOK

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Mario DeMarco
152 Maple Street
W. Boylston, MA 01583

THE CLARKE FAMILY: CHAMPION JOCKEY RIDERS OF THE WORLD AND TRAPEZE ARTISTS EXTRAORDINARY

by Antony Hippisley Coxe

Part III 1900 onwards

It is the ambition of most circus artists to run their own show, and the birth of a new century naturally gives a fillip to such a project. Alfred Clarke was no exception. When he and his brother John Frederick finished their Christmas season at the Crystal Palace (where they shared the top of the bill with the Hegelmans and Therese Renz) they began working once more on plans to put Clarke's Circus before the public. The fact that Margaret Powell had been in the same programme may also have had something to do with it, for the Powells and Clarks have often been closely associated as circus proprietors, in England, Ireland, and, as we shall later see, in the Far East.

The two brothers chose Dover as the most suitable place to put on a circus, and in February Alfred appeared before the Managing Committee of the Dover Town Council to present his case for permission to erect a Circus building in Castle Place for a stay of eight weeks with an option to renew. After Clarke had been asked to withdraw from the meeting, the question was debated. The more progressive members of the Council pointed out that this was a business enterprise, backed by two brothers who had capital and a good reputation; if, therefore, the fire precautions and sanitary arrangements met with the surveyor's approval, they saw no reason to prevent it. The more suspicious members seemed reluctant to grant permission, but their misgivings were eventually overcome. Alfred made two visits to Dover in April but the circus does not appear to have materialized, possibly because early in May the two Clarks were offered—and accepted—a contract to appear with *Le Grand Cirque Leon Doux* in Marseilles. For a salary of 8,000 francs for 44 days, they were to work four acts at each performance, starting in August. The four acts were selected from the brothers' full repertoire which consisted of the following:

1. Double Jockey Act.
2. Double Juggling Act.
3. Olympian Games.



Two jockey riders on Clarke's Royal English Circus in Alexandria, Egypt, in July 1918, just before things went sour. The taller of the two jockeys is Alfred John William Clarke. On the back of this photo, one of the Clarks has written, "the joeys are Bandman's, the iron stakes are ours."

4. Jumps by John Frederick Clarke.
5. Jockey by John Frederick Clarke.
6. Juggling on Horseback by John Frederick Clarke.
7. Bareback Somersault by Alfred Clarke.
8. Japanese Barrels by Alfred Clarke.
9. Jockey by Alfred Clarke.
10. Backwards Juggling by Alfred Clarke.
11. Ground Juggling by Alfred Clarke.
12. Bareback riding at high speed by Alfred Clarke.

In June, Alfred went to Brighton to look for a place in which they could practice. From July 16th John Frederick worked at George Zalva's Hippodrome, St. Thomas' Street, Scarborough. The Wheelers, trick-cyclists, the Flying Dillons, and August and September were in the bill. At the end of July a great new at-

traction was added: The Wargraph, which brought the audience pictures of the Paris Exhibition, the South African War and "recent events in China."

The high spot of Alfred and John Frederick's contribution was billed as "The Celebrated Alfred and John Frederick Clarke, in their renowned Double Jockey Act, in which they include the Unique Feat of one standing on the shoulders of the other, whilst riding one horse." But from an historical point of view the engagement is more important because it was here that young Alfred made his debut, aged 11, working as auguste to his father and uncle.

On August 19th the two brothers arrived in Marseilles, and stayed with Leon Doux until September 23rd. August and September were also on this show, while the rest of the bill consisted of Les Meteors, the Averino Family, M. L. Loyal, Orlando and Antonio, Bebe and Auguste and Lillian Humel. On leaving Doux the brothers immediately joined Plége in their wooden-walled, canvas-roofed construction in Bordeaux. The contract, on paper headed "Cirque Plége, Fondé en 1856, Directrice-propriétaire, Vve Plége" was for six months, starting in

February, 1901, at 2,700 francs a month.

The Clarkes joined Plége on October 14th and continued with her until August 30th, 1901. At Rouen, which followed Bordeaux, they took nine calls. Here the whole of the second half of the programme was taken up with a spectacle entitled, "The Boers, or The War in the Transvaal" and described as an "Episode d'Actualité Militaire, avec Ballets et Evolutions Equestres, 150 personnes en piste." Sharing the circus side of the bill were the Three Luppas on eight aerial bars, M. Rowland in his jockey act, and M. Williams with his "Scottish Leaping Dogs."

Christmas and the New Year were celebrated in Nantes, where, incidentally, Alfred bought a chestnut mare. The circus played a fortnight's season at St. Nazaire before returning to Bordeaux where they opened on March 3rd. Here Frank Brown came and saw them and offered them another South American tour. Then followed Montpellier and Nancy.

Photographs of the Cirque Plége at this period shows a quasi-classical front with a broken pediment and pilasters, pierced by three doors, and the name A. Plége is given as proprietor. Joseph-Antoine or Antoine Plége, as he was more usually called, was born in 1831 and died in 1898, the circus was then run by his widow till she died in 1902, when it passed to the children.

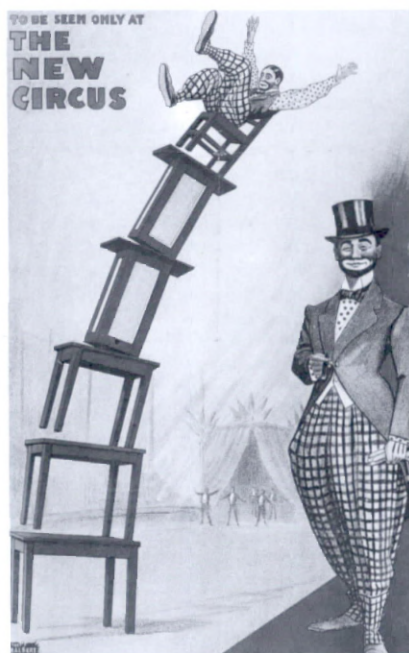
In June the Clarkes were engaged to appear with Circus Busch for 19 months starting in September, at 3,500 francs a month. The contract contains this clause: "To those acts which have clown and auguste, their own boy will act as clown." This refers to Alfred's son also called Alfred, then 12 years old. Another interesting clause reads: "Messrs. Clarke will appear in the Circus Salomonski in Moscow, and whilst there, their salary will be paid in French or German coin, or its equivalent in Russian money." They also had to stand in uniform throughout the equestrian part of the show. This may have proved rather irksome, because of the fifteen acts and equestrian spectacles which made up the programme, nine involved horses, and only three were liberty numbers. But the Clarkes also insisted on certain clauses being inserted, one being the right to have the ring for one hour every day for rehearsals. The brothers declared that they had never before appeared together in Germany and Austria.

They opened in Hamburg on September 2nd, just two days after leaving Plége at Boulogne. Clown Ghezzi and Burckhardt-Footitt were in the bill, but what must have pleased Alfred and John Frederick more was that Charles and Annie Clarke had

been with Busch and did not leave until September 8th. On September 7th there was a special "High Life Evening," but the only sign on the programme of what this could have been is Item 7, which reads "Lord Plumsterton's Elephants!"

On September 25th Busch moved to his magnificent permanent circus in Berlin for a seven months season.

On January 1st, 1902, John Frederick Clarke was married, in Christ Church, Woborn Square, Bloomsbury, London to Ida Iona Ginnett, daughter of Frederick Ginnett. This marriage certificate is rather puzzling. The bridegroom's father is given as John Clarke; whereas it should be Augustus Alfred, of course. Ada Iona's father is given as John Frederick Ginnett, circus proprietor, and the witnesses were Louis Ginnett, A. M. Ginnett and Lilly Ginnett. At that time the bride gave as her address, 32, Upper Bedford Place, Russell Square, and John Frederick gave an address in Berlin: 27, Burgstrasse.



Half sheet lithograph used by the Clarke Circus during its Asian and Middle Eastern tour. This stock design was printed by the Halbert Litho Co. of Birmingham, England, and is in black and red.

How long John Frederick remained in England or took as a honeymoon I do not know. Busch closed in Berlin at the end of April and Alfred, presumably with his brother and son, opened with Busch at Cologne on May 3rd where they remained until July 17th; from July 19th until August 18th Busch was in Hamburg. The next day the Clarkes left for Russia, crossed the frontier three days later

and arrived in Moscow on August 25th. Here they settled down at the Hotel Bretanoff in the same street as Salomonski's permanent circus building, the Boulevard des Fleurs. The laconic entries in Alfred's hand say nothing of how they fared. "Commenced Salomonski's 28th August, 1902. Finished with Salomonski Sunday March 1st, 1903," is all that is said.

The only information referring to any of the Clarkes during this period that I have found is a letter from Mrs. J. Welby Cooke, to Ony (Ida Iona?). But it is just possible that even this might have originally been sent to Iona Ginnett who married Douglas Cooke, and subsequently passed to Ida Iona. But this I doubt as Ida Iona as well as Iona seems to have been called Ony.

HOTEL DE L'EUROPE
Telegraphic Address
Europe
ABC Code 4th Edition.

Singapore-October 20th, 1902

My dear old Pal Ony,

Your short letter received and pleased to hear from you. I have written quite a heap of letters to you since we have been out here but have not received any answer. I had a letter from Auntie Rill by last mail and she says the Howards have arrived in Auckland and made a success on their opening. We have been here over two months and I like being in this show very much. Mrs. Love is such a dear little woman. I was speaking to her about you and she told me to ask you if you would like to come out here, if so to write her and let her know your lowest terms for 12 months the shortest, with your own horse, she said your acts were just what they wanted—trick act and manege. John says if you decide to come out of course Cardingen (sic) is at your disposal, and if you write to them (which he advises you to do) send a short address as they might want to do business by cable, for they will want you to come out as soon as possible. I am sure you would like being in this show, and besides it would be a change for you. John says if you decide to come out he wants you to bring him a high jumping greyhound (young) also get him a *cushion*. Atherton is a good man to get them from. And also try and get a somersault dog or football dog, as you can't get them out here. Now do try and come, dear. John says he was always under obligations to



Tent and marquee of De Kock Circus, probably in Italy, on which the Clarkes performed early in this century.

you and would be glad if you would do this for him. Write to them by return, don't forget now. Also I would like you to bring out some tights for John and myself, singlets and legs, Size 3 for John and leg size 2 for me. Blue and pink and any other pretty colour, and blue, pink, black, red for me. Don't bring any thick clothes yourself, but white coats and skirts, and muslin dresses. Get them in England as they will be cheaper there. You can bring me a few nice blouses if you like and anything nice that you think I will like, some lace ties.

Now you will be surprised to know that I will be having a little one in a few months time so I want you to do me a favour (if you come out) and bring me some nice robes and little lace bonnets, also some bootees, silk, cotton or wool, and anything you see nice for babies, for you can't buy any readymade clothes out here and they are so nice in England.

Of course, my dear old pal, you can be Godmother, if you wish to be. I should be only too pleased, so you must come out even if it is only for that event. Now mind you come out, don't mind anything but come, *come*, COME. Of course they pay fares. I will close now with fond love, hoping to hear and see you soon, Believe me.

Your loving pal Edie.
P.S. John sends love and says you have got to come out.

Address: Harmston's Circus,
c/o Kelly and Walsh,
SINGAPORE.

In another handwriting is scrawled, "Return this with your opinion," and also the rather acid comment, "Why not buy them the London Hippo . . . and Peter Robinsons." In this letter I have corrected the spelling and inserted some punctuation.

On leaving Russia, Alfred and John

Frederick rejoined Busch in his permanent circus building at Breslau until their contract was concluded on March 22nd. Earlier that month they had signed a contract to appear with Rancy's Circus, opening in Milan, for a seven month's season at 2,800 francs a month. This was subsequently prolonged until January 10th, 1904 at 2,250 francs a month, and 600 francs a day while rehearsing.

Unfortunately, just as they joined Rancy on March 30th, their father and their brother Charles and sister Annie left to join De Kock's Circus in Antwerp. But they found an old compatriot in Craston who was presenting an equestrian scene in the same bill. On April 9th they left Milan, where they had been appearing at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele, and made for Turin, followed by Geneva, where Rancy's programme was presented in the first permanent circus building to be decorated in the Art Nouveau style of the period. On June 6th Alfred sprained a muscle in his groin, but apparently went on working. On July 8th the company returned to France, opening at Dijon, and continuing the tour to Troyes, Boulogne and Lille. A snapshot taken while Alfred was with Rancy at Lille reveals what looks like the apparatus for *l'Auto-Bolide* in the programme. From Lille the two brothers would take a day-trip over to Valenciennes, where De Kock's Circus was then working. A photograph captioned "Valenciennes, September, 1903" shows a neat wooden circus construction, but the name is not visible. I doubt that this is De Kock's show as other photographs clearly show that it was a tenting show, with an original form of parade front, and I feel certain it is the same tent as that used by Beketow in Copenhagen. (See illustrations).

A few weeks later, on November 7th, Alfred Augustus and his two younger children, Annie and Charles, set sail for Cape Town in the *Arundel Castle*, in all probability to join Fillis's

Circus. Photographs show that in 1904 Fillis had a construction, taller than the usual continental variety and with a more steeply pitched roof. But other photos show that he also had a Big Top and that animal acts were worked on a wagon cage.

At this time Alfred and John Frederick were in Lyons where they spent Christmas and the New Year. They then went to Geneva where they waited for Rancy to open his 1904 season on April 2nd. They filled in their time rehearsing in the ring of the new building and, with the aid of the "mechanic," training Alfred's two children, young Alfred, then aged 15, and Annie Iona who was already showing signs of remarkable beauty at the age of 11.

There are also pictures of Alfred and John Frederick rehearsing a two-man high on a bareback horse, and performing another act with a pad. They seem to have spent quite a lot of time with the Rancy family, and among the photographs there is one of Marcel and Albert Rancy with Annie and Ida Iona at the window of the Brasserie du Panorama.

The brothers' contract this year was for 8 months at 2,500 francs a month. They worked through France, playing in permanent circuses when convenient, otherwise using a construction or tent. While at Dunkirk they went over to Lille to see Wulff's Circus. The tour continued to Hazebroucke, Lens, Douai, Beauvais, Le Havre and Rouen, where they finished the season on December 1st. The next morning they set off for Glasgow, where they were billed to appear at Hengler's Circus in Sauchiehall Street on December 17th. There they stayed until March 4th, 1905. With them were André Rancy presenting an act called "Troika" as well as his equilibrist horse "Ali" and his remarkable "*Cheval des Portes - 'Alger'*." Albert Bechet, the equestrian, was another artiste who had appeared with Rancy; Horton & Linder, The Heathen Chinese, Sunshine and Shadow, grotesques, the Grovini Family of Acrobats, Jackaway and Bell, Adams and Ward, the Bio-Photoscope and a water spectacle, entitled "The Flood," completed the bill.

On March 4th Alfred Augustus, Annie and Charlie arrived back from South Africa, so the brothers hurried South to meet them. The following Saturday Alfred went to Antwerp to look at a horse. Not being very impressed he went on to Frankfurt where he bought a horse which he found in Schumann's Circus. He arrived back on March 18th.

The seeds which Mrs. Welby Cooke had sown in her letter two and a half years before were now about to bear fruit. On April 5th, 1905, Alfred and John Frederick Clarke boarded s.s.

Monmouthshire and set sail for Singapore to appear with Harmston's Circus. Five days later heavy seas off Finisterre broke up the horse boxes and the mare Nellie got hurt.

Early in the morning of May 11th they arrived at Penang, and, since Harmston's Circus happened to be working there, Alfred went ashore and paid a brief visit, before going on to Singapore and waiting for the show's return. The Clarke Brothers docked on May 14th and the Circus arrived six days later. Alfred and John Frederick made their debut in the Far East May 27th.

At that time Harmston's Circus was owned by Mrs. Harmston-Love; Robert Love was manager and R. Alton was Agent. Nonna Florrie Banvard, Wijntham (sic) and Kitty, and John Welby Cooke were among the artists. The season in Singapore ended on Jun 4th and Surabaya, Malang, Bilitar, Kediri, Djambong, Modjokerto, Madioen, Solo, Samarang, Pekalogan, Tegal, Cheribon, Tanjang Priok, Welterfreiden, Batavia (where John hurt his knee) and Singapore followed. On the same day as they left Singapore, October 31st, back in London, at East Finchley, Lord George Sanger's material was being sold. From Rangoon they went to Madras, where they celebrated Christmas and the New Year and then on to Bombay. Meanwhile, the Clarkonians in Paris were taking part in the opening of a new circus building - the Cirque Metropole. I suspect that their appearance was not confined to aerial work for M. Percy's and M. Ernst's names appear as jockey riders. Photographs of Harmston's Circus show a medium sized two-pole tent, with scallops round the top of the wallings, surrounded by a corrugated iron fence. Inside, there were the usual quarter poles, and a high and low gallery; the dressing tent has a fly sheet; and one of the acts appears to be "Looping the Loop on a Bicycle." The show visited Hyderabad, where "a man and a cow" used to bring the water for the horses each day, Secunderabad, and Calcutta. Here Alf Ryan, the stud groom, was found guilty of striking a Javanese workman and fined 200 Rs. The Clarkes seem to have got on with Mrs. Harmston-Love, for they allowed her to ride one of their horses.

The Clarkes' contract ended on May 26th, 1906 at Colombo. There one of their horses died on June 2nd, and there they boarded s.s. *Silvia* for Europe on June 12th. Ten days later Schimmel - presumably another of the ring horses - had to be killed. So soon after docking at Hamburg Alfred set off to replenish their stock. He first inspected a horse in the Semsroth Circus. He bought a horse called Fuchs on June 27th and a grey mare, called

Margot, on August 10th, but on that day his mare Liza died. On September 12th he bought a blue roan. After seeing both Schumann's and Busch's circuses in Berlin he returned to Hamburg to pick up his horses and travel to Vienna, where he and his brother were booked to appear with Beketow's Circus from September 29th - January 6th, 1907.

The contract is rather muddling, for it states that "Herr A. Clarke and his three sons Alfred Clarke, John Frederick Clarke, and Augustus Alfred Clarke" should have worked until March 28th, 1907 at 3,500 francs a month. The repertoire is certainly that of John Frederick, Alfred John, and Alfred John William. Furthermore, it states that Mrs. Alfred and Mrs. John Clarke were to travel free. The next engagement for Alfred and John Frederick was with André Plége at Brussels. Alfred went over to Dunkirk to see his father, sister Annie and brother Charles, who were working with the Circus De Kock and spent three days with them. The following week they came over from London for seven days' holiday.

The fact that Alfred Augustus was with De Kock would tend to confirm the belief that the Beketow contract was made out in error. Yet from the photographs one must assume that either Beketow bought De Kock's Big Top, or De Kock bought Beketow's, so the mystery has not been completely resolved.

Bordeaux, Rheims and Caen followed. Plége appears to have billed Alfred and his son as brothers, making three brothers in all, for John Frederick remained with the act. Miss Ginnett (Mrs. Alfred Clarke) was also in the bill, while among the other acts were Les Freres Fillis, and Mlle Dolinda, who worked on a single trapeze. While appearing in the Plége construction at Caen the brothers sold their roan and bought a bronze-coloured horse. While they were here The Three Clarkes received a contract to work in St. Petersburg, signed by Scipione Ciniselli, for six months at 1,600 roubles a month.

On June 26th, 1907, in London, Charles Clarke married Emilia Florentina Teresa Lopez, 28 year old daughter of Jose Lopez (deceased) who like his daughter was a circus artiste. In July he got a contract to appear in his own solo act at Ciniselli for three months at 500 roubles a month and with his wife working on a trapeze for three months at 600 roubles a month. The period for all the Clarkes was the same, September 15th/28th, 1907 - March 15th/28th, 1908.

Plége finished the season in Belgium, and on September 6th the Clarkes left Antwerp for a week in London and a quick visit to Wallingford, before returning to Antwerp



Beketow's Circus in Austria, circa 1907. This front seems identical to the De Kock marquee, and leads one to suppose they are one and the same.

to take the s.s. *Axelhuys* for St. Petersburg. They arrived in Russia on September 21st and opened at Ciniselli's permanent circus building a week later. All three wives accompanied their husbands, and Alfred also took his son and daughter with him. In one programme the Clarkes contributed three numbers. Charles worked in a somersault act, Alfred and John Frederick in double juggling, and Alfred in a jockey act, but no doubt the changes were rung fairly frequently, and in February we find the three brothers accompanied by the boy and girl of the younger generation all appearing in a five-handed jockey act.

With the wives there must have been eight Clarkes in Moscow that Christmas of 1907, but whether they enjoyed it, what they saw, how they felt or what they thought, I do not know.

Photographs show them in the snow-covered streets, Charles Clarke standing in the middle of the ice-packed river, horse-drawn sleighs and fur hats, but of their written reactions there is not a word. Between the entry, "Opened with Ciniselli St. Petersburg Sept. 28th, 1907" and "Sunday, March 8th, 1908, closed with Circus S. Ciniselli, left St. Petersburg after the performance," there is only one entry which refers to the five-handed jockey act, mentioned above, which was seen on Thursday, February 20th, 1908. However, from the address book we can guess that Alfred and his family found digs with a family called Trube at 6, Rue Karavannaja.

Seven days after leaving St. Petersburg they landed in Hull. From March 16th to 19th they were in London, then went to Southampton, whence Alfred set sail for Buenos Aires. Probably the whole family travelled out together for the bills of Frank Brown's Equestrian Company announced a five-handed jockey act but as the *Buenos Aires Standard* for June 18th reported that "recently a sister of the Clarke Brothers has joined

them in their act," it may be that she followed them out later. Anyhow, they opened at the Teatro San Martin on April 5th. After a four weeks season they sailed on s.s. *Vienna* for Monte Video, where they worked for two weeks at the Teatro Politeamo, an unimposing little building from the outside, though this belies the interior. Six weeks in the much grander theatre at Rio de Janeiro followed, and from there they went by train to Sao Paulo where they appeared in the Polytheama from October 1st - 24th. At Campinas they performed in a barn-like building with a central pillar which came down into the middle of the ring, like a kingpole. This place was, I believe, usually a roller skating rink. After staying here from October 28th to November 8th, they moved on to the bull-ring at Santos. Here their tour with Frank Brown ended on November 14th, and three days later Alfred left en board RMSP *Aragon* with the horses. His wife and children followed on the s.s. *Amazon*.

On Boxing Day, 1908, the three brothers opened at Hengler's Cirque in Argyll Street, London, so soon to end its days as a circus and start its career as the Palladium. Alfred visited Paris and Dunkirk between January 20th and 23rd probably to look for horses. In February, he went to Calais and stayed with "Uncle" Charles (presumably the founder of the Clarkonians) and while over there bought the horse Baghongi. This Spring Alfred seems to have kept out of the sawdust ring, at least as a performer. Much of his time must have been taken up in training his new horses. He bought a grey mare from the Fossetts on April 17th, and a two-year-old chestnut mare at Chelmsford Fair. But on July 5th Alfred and his son opened at Connor's Circus, Isle of Man for an eleven weeks season.

That Summer Miss Clarke was at Medrano and amongst those who appeared at a special matinee on July 14th, offered by *La Ville de Paris aux enfants des écoles communales*, were Cyerillo and Tonitoff, Antonet and Grock and "The American Vitograph."

On Wednesday, October 20th, Annie and her son and daughter left for New York on the White Star Liner *Teutonic*. Alfred followed with the horses on the *Minnehaha* three days later. But they did not stay in America, they travelled on by s.s. *Merida* (Ward Line) to Havana, where they were to appear with Pubillones on a short tour of Mexico — Merida, Progreso, Vera Cruz — a return date at Havana and a tour of Cuba. In Havana they were in quarantine from Dec. 28th when they landed until January 3rd when they opened — the Clarkes contributing four numbers to the programme. Pubillones, who had a two

pole tent seems to have presented a small street parade on this tour, for a photograph shows a clown on horseback, a clown on stilts and a clown riding a donkey in the streets. The show was transported sometimes by railroad, sometimes by oxcart and horses. On occasion they spent the night in the railway coaches, and once they stayed with a sugar-mill proprietor. Transport seems to have been difficult and occasionally they arrived too late to perform. Their last appearance with Pubillones was on The Isle of Pines on Tuesday, May 31st.

They arrived back at Tilbury on June 20th, where John Frederick met them. They stayed with him at Kennington Park Road until he left for St. Etienne on July 5th, and then went to George Sanger's quarters at Park Farm, East Finchley, where Alfred remained until August 27th. Adrian in "*Sur les Chemins des Grand Cirques Voyageurs*" says that Alfred and Charles were billed to appear at Egelton's Circus in Marseille from August 13th-16th. Alfred John certainly was not there. Perhaps Charles appeared with his nephew, Alfred John William, or alone.

At the end of August, Annie and her daughter left for Berlin via the Hook of Holland, while Alfred and his son took the horses via Hamburg, arriving in Berlin on August 30th. Here they opened with Schumann on September 10th, 1910. Their repertoire as set out in the contract runs:

1. A. J. W. Clarke-Trick riding including double Pirouette.
2. Triple Jockey-Miss Clarke and two Mister Clarkes.
3. Double juggling on two horses.
4. Solo Jockey.
5. Miss Clarke-pad act.
6. Female impersonation-by Mr. Clarke.
7. Trampoline Ground act.

Interior of Beketow's Circus, circa 1907.
Note gas illumination in tent with light fixtures surrounding ring.



For this they kept six horses. Schumann booked them for 12 months at 4,000 marks a month.

On Saturday, October 8th, after Chris Van Dinteren had taken his orchestra through "The Luxemburger March" by Lehar, his own composition entitled "Elizabeth Waltz" and a potpourri by Lincke called "Schlager auf Schlager," the programme opened with a Hurdle Act by Mr. Woodson. Next came the Bukovina Mountain Ponies presented by Herr Bono, then Mlle Belloni and her Cockatoos. For the Clarke number, Annie, Alfred, and Alfred John William appeared in a triple riding act. Sandor's Burlesque Circus, preceded the act of Dora Schumann and Carl Hess. Then came Antonet and Grock, while the perch act of the Brothers Mirono brought the first half to a close. The whole of the second half of the programme was taken up with a four-act romantic pantomime called *Der Grosse Coup der Schmuggler*. This programme is of interest not only because of the inclusion of Grock, but because it also contains the name of the person to whom young Alfred J. W. lost his heart - Dora Schumann.

On September 17th, 1910, "Uncle Tom" had died, aged 63; but I do not know who "Uncle Tom" was. John spent Oct. 5th-11th in Berlin on his way home from Lyons. But he did not stay long in England; on October 15th he and Ida sailed for Havana. Then on November 23rd, Uncle Charlie died aged 57. This must have been the father of the Clarkonians. Two days later Annie went to London for the funeral, and returned to Berlin on November 30th with Charles' second daughter, Josephine (Vena) with her. Vena's eldest brother Ernest came out a fortnight later, but only stayed two days before going on to Paris, where I think he must have picked up his brother Charles.

Round about the turn of the year we find several names which seem to have little to do with the Clarke family. Yet, as we have seen, Alfred is not

one to introduce extraneous subjects in his personal Route Book. On December 8th, 1910, we read that 'Whash Khan left Berlin for Java sailing on *King Wilhelm II*. Who is Whash Khan? Is it a code name? Wash-can? The Cosos are another family who are mentioned. They pass through Berlin en route for Warsaw Monday, January 16th, 1911. They return from Warsaw on February 21st. Ernest and Charlie appear to leave with one of them the following night; and Vena leaves with another Coso (or it may be the same one) on March 5th.

A horse called Tommy was bought on February 22nd. On Saturday, April 15th, young Alfred was out of the bill with a sore throat and could not return to work until April 24th. The last performance in Berlin was given two days later, and the Clarkes left immediately for Munich where Schumann's Circus opened on April 29th.

Annie, at this time, appears to have been in Paris, but managed to spend ten days with her husband before returning there on June 24th.

Alfred's next engagement was with Wallenda's Circus in Liège, but before opening they made a quick trip to Berlin to see the premiere of Schumann's Circus from the other side of the ring fence. John and Charles, together with Burckhardt-Footit and Max and Moritz were, at this time, with Busch which opened in Berlin two days later, but the Clarke's contract ended on September 22nd and Alfred sent the horses which had been working with Busch, including Pexin, who was lame and Tommy to Liège. Annie and her daughter left Berlin for Wallenda's on September

The great flyer Ernie Clarke also did a jockey riding act as shown in this photo taken during the winter of 1905-1906 at the Cirque Metropole in Paris. Percy Clarke on left, Ernest on right.



26th and Alfred and his son left the next day.

Their contract was for one lady, two gentlemen and six horses for the period September 30th - November 5th at 200 francs a day.

Here in Liège was another gathering of the Clarke clan. John Frederick and his wife arrived on October 11th; and, later, Charlie joined them for he was booked to appear at a rival establishment, "Le Cirque Excelsior Dutrieu." Wallenda seems to have billed his show as "Le Cirque Espagnol" and put it on at the Manège de la Fontaine. Lockhart's Elephants, presented by Captain Taylor, the Balaguers and Baracetas were on the bill. Annie came over from Paris, (where, I think, she may have appeared with D. Yelding and J. and C. Powell in a buggy act with a dappled grey at Medrano). Such a chance to see his family could not be missed by Alfred Augustus, and on September 19th he also arrived in Liège. Before he left, he saw his son presented with a diploma and medal. An article about the family appeared in *L'Express* in which it describes Alfred III's somersault to his horse's back and reports that Annie used no "tremplin" (cushion). Alfred John William was then 23, and his sister 19. Old Alfred once more appeared in the ring to keep up the horses for his family at the Manège de la Fontaine on November 4th at a special gala performance in honour of the Clarkes. He and his daughter Annie returned to Paris the next day, the last night of Wallenda's season. The following day Mrs. Alfred Clarke and her daughter Annie, and John Frederick and his wife, left for London, while Alfred followed with horses arriving on November 8th.

Ten days later he set sail from Liverpool in s.s. *Media* to join Harmston. This was a new vessel of the Anchor Line under the command of Captain W. Robertson. The Clarkes - Alfred and Annie with their two children made up more than one third of the saloon passengers travelling to Calcutta. Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Carter, Mrs. Bird, Mrs. H. L. Dunlop, Mr. S. L. Thompson, Mrs. D. Oswald and Miss Ada Wallace completed the list. The journey was marred by the death of their horse, Jossier (Circus slang for someone not of the profession) off Ushant. On December 18th they made their landfall and the other horses were unloaded the next day. The Clarkes opened with Harmston on December 23rd. It was a popular show and *The Indian Daily News* for Friday, December 29th carried the following notice:

If there is one show in Calcutta that caters for every caste and creed, for both young and old and for the poor as well as the rich, and is equally enjoyed and

appreciated by all, that show is Harmston's. If proof is wanting it is forthcoming in the bumper houses that they continue to draw at both performances daily, and this despite the fact that there are nearly half a dozen similar shows in Calcutta and numerous other attractions . . . The large number of people forming Harmston's troupe permits of frequent entire changes of programme . . . There has been an added attraction since last week in the shape of the famous "Clarkes," an accomplished acrobatic and equestrian family the merits of whose performance must be seen to be properly appreciated. It is beyond the power of description. They perform all the tricks they are credited with, with a consummate grace and finish which is a pleasure to behold. To be privileged to witness their turn alone is worth the money paid for admittance . . .

At this time the Clarkes were contributing three acts to the programme. Young Alfred and Annie on the trampoline were acclaimed as "one of the funniest things seen in Calcutta for a long time;" their father performed a somersault riding act; and the whole family appeared in a triple jockey act. But no doubt the changes were rung fairly frequently. One of the features of Harmston's at this time was a raffle. In Calcutta everyone buying a ticket on December 29th was given a coupon which entitled them to participate in a draw for a gramophone which would be given away the following night. It was, however, stipulated that participants must be in the tent when the draw took place. Gold and silver watches were given away at special "Souvenir matinees."

Harmston's route took them to Bankipore, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Agra, Delhi, Meerut and Umballa. Here they appear from a photograph to have suffered some damage by storm. The Big Top and striped wallings are shown ripped. It is a two poled tent, the height to the bale-ring being approximately 40 feet. They took in Lahore before returning to Calcutta. On April 9th, the circus was loaded onto s.s. *Kum Sang* of the Indo-China Line which set sail for Singapore, where they arrived on April 18th and opened the following day. In the next two weeks 18 performances were given before loading the circus on board s.s. *Elout* of the K.N.P.F. Maatschappij for a tour of the Netherlands East Indies. Here is the route: Soerabaya, Pasoeroean, Probelingo (where the British Military cemetery lay across the road from the tober); Malang,

Blitar, Kediri, Modjerkarto, Kerter-sono (where there was no hotel and they had to stay at Ngandjock, 20 miles away!); Solo, Djokjarkarta, Samarang, Pekalongau (where "found Whash Khan"), Tegal, Cheribon, Bandoeng, Soekeboemi, Buitenzorg, and Batavia (where Alfred John hurt his wrist and his son hurt his arm). On September 16th they picked up s.s. *Elout* at Tangjong Priok to sail for Sumatra. At 4 a.m. on September 17th a Mrs. Wamba died and was buried at Medan-deli on Saturday, September 21st. Who she was I do not know. After performing here for ten days, they took s.s. *Van Der Parra* to Penang.

The *Penang Straits Echo* for October 5th gives particular praise to Annie Clarke and refers to Jennie Harmston and the Peerless Potters as being in the Bill. It was while they were here that Clarke's horse Bogey died. From Penang s.s. *Edavana* took the circus to Rangoon where they gave an 18 days season, before doing a circular tour of Pegu, Toungoo, Pynmana, Yamethin, Madalay and back to Rangoon, where they boarded s.s. *Angora* for Calcutta. On arrival they attended the funeral of Mrs. McGinty, who had died on December 17th.

The bill at this time consisted of Pony and Monkey Steeplechase, Velasca and Elias (Risley Act), Four-horse Courier by Alfred Clarke, Comic Entree by Hayes & Mickey, Trampoline Act by Annie and Alfred Clarke, William Harmston's Novel Animal Act, Comic Entree by Mickey and Auguste (sic), Velasco and Ambrosia on the Roman Rings, Triple Jockey Act by the Clarke Family, Interval, The Flying Potters, Rudsit and Velasco (Trick Cyclists), Double Juggling on Horseback by "The Brothers Clarke," Comic Entree by Hayes and Mickey, "Dying to Save the Colours" by F. Felix, introducing the highly trained horse Mahomet, Parade by Mickey and God Save the King. Madame Harmston Love is given as proprietor, William Harmston as Manager, F. Felix as Equestrian Director, and C. H. Bruce as Bandmaster.

Friday, 17th January, was their last night with Harmston, with whom they had travelled for 13 months. On January 18th, 1913 the Clarkes stood on the quay waving good-bye to Harmston's as once again it set off for Penang. Five days later they boarded s.s. *Media* for home.

They arrived at Dundee during the night of February 23rd-24th. Annie Clarke left for London as soon as they disembarked, while Alfred John attended to the unloading of the horses and followed later. Prince, one of his horses, had to be killed.

On March 5th Charles arrived from

Paris, but left the following morning with the mysterious Coso. On March 11th young Alfred brought Dora Schumann over from Berlin and on March 13th married her at Maida Vale registry office. On the marriage certificate her name is given as Dorothea Hubertine Maria Happé, then 26 years old.

That Spring, Alfred John visited John Sanger at Streatham and the Fossetts at Fairford, Gloucestershire. He bought a bay mare, Juno, at Islington. At the end of April he met "Guise and Batty at Price and Kings, Kennington Cross, to view McGinty's creams." On May 15th Batty sailed from London Bridge with McGinty's ponies, but whether he was bound, I do not know. At the beginning of July Alfred Clarke joined Dutrieu at Douai, and with him went his son, whose *Extrait du Registre d'Immatriculation* gives his arrival in Lille as September 4th, where he stayed until September 27th, and his stay in Bordeaux from October 14th to November 3rd. Actually Dutrieu visited Turcoing after Douai and before Lille. And here, if I am right in ascribing an undated programme to this visit, the bill consisted of Tonitoff & Seiffert, Gusta des Botoni, Cyerillo et Busby, Les 4 Rainats, Les 4 Owkens, Les Flocchi (equestrian acrobats), Mlle Ricarda (Somersaults on horseback), The Ashtons (Lady Gymnasts), Crescendo & Forest (Musical Clowns), Benjonas (equilibrists), the Six Mettros (juggling fans and hoops) and, of course, the Clarkes. The total number of turns listed in the programme is twenty-two, but no less than seven of these were orchestral.

These programmes are particularly interesting because they show that the Clarkes were already thinking of taking their own show to the Far East, for when they did manage to achieve this three of the acts mentioned appeared with them, two going out with the original company.

At Bordeaux the Clarkes appeared with Roche's Circus. After a quick visit to London between November 4th and 10th the Clarkes joined the Cirque Pasquier at Anger on November 12th and on December 19th appeared with Ancillotti - Plége at Nantes where they remained until February 18th. On December 20th, Alfred John became a grandfather, Dora presenting Alfred J. W. with a daughter.

Brother Charles was in Liège at the beginning of 1914. A postcard addressed to Alfred Clarke at 55 Ongar Road, West Brompton, reads: "My dear Papa, All well here. Nothing to tell." On Alfred John's return from Ancillotti-Plége he saw his brother before Charles set sail for the United States of America.

Through the anxious days of Sum-

mer 1914 the Clarkes continued to plan their circus. On July 12th he and Powell (presumably Alfred Powell) went to Paris - maybe to line up further artistes. Moris and Vincent had been approached some time before, and a contract had already been signed by the Aleximes. This contract, entirely handwritten, runs as follows:

Agreement between Mr. Alfred Clarke and the Alexime Troup Flying Trapeze Performers, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Alexime and their assistant, Miss Marthe Hamel (Two ladies, one Gentleman) all of 7, Rue des Perchamps, Paris.

The Aleximes agree to sail with Mr. A. Clarke's Circus Company to Calcutta or/and



Members of Harmston's Circus relax in their dressing tent before a performance in Burma in November 1912.

elsewhere, and to travel thence with the company wherever it shall visit. Mr. Clarke to provide second class accommodation for all travelling, rail or ship, and to pay The Alexime Troup Twenty pounds (£20) per week for all time that their performances are given. The Alexime Troupe to give their complete Flying Trapeze performance, and in addition Mrs. Alexime will give the equestrian number known as "The Voltige" and also, if requested, a dancing turn either alone or with Miss Clarke. The Alexime Troupe agree to take part and assist in any part of the circus performance if requested, at not more than nine performances in one week when and where given, but should they be required to take part in more they agree to do so in consideration of one pound two shilling (£1.2.-) being paid them for each performance over nine given by the Circus in one week. Salary to commence from date of first performance and to be paid immediately seven evening performances have been given. In British India, where Sunday performances are not given, Sunday shall count as though services had been rendered. No

salary to be paid for days on which performances have not been given, but the total time lost travelling etc., shall not exceed nine weeks in one year from date of first performance. This agreement is for one year from date of first performance but it is further agreed that Mr. Clarke has the option of renewing it from time to time after the expiration of one year's services up to a period not exceeding four years. At the conclusion of this agreement Mr. Clarke will pay second class return fares to Europe for the Alexime Troupe. Should the Alexime Troupe or any member of it fail to give their performance at any



Annie Ginnett, wife of Alfred Clarke, riding "school" side saddle in the back yard at Smarand, Java.

representation Mr. Clarke has the right to deduct a "pro rata" of the salary. In the event of the Circus being stopped by Force Major (sic) no salary will be paid. The Alexime Troupe will leave Europe on a date between September 9th, 1914 and October 31st 1914. This agreement made in London, December 6th, 1913. Signed Alexime.

On July 15th Powell sailed from Marseilles for Colombo, and lucky he was to get away. Eleven days later Alfred went to Le Harvre where he found that "War was fully expected." He had already made arrangements for his family, and presumably the rest of the company, to leave on August 4th, but these had to be cancelled. It was not until January 14th, 1915, that Alfred Junior left Cardiff for Colombo in the Japanese steamer *Suwa Maru*, arriving the following month.

On Sunday, March 13th, Charlie sailed from Liverpool in s.s. *Tuscania* of The Anchor Line, but his destination was not given. Ten days later, on March 23rd, Alfred left London with the horses for Southampton and

thence to Le Harvre. From there he was able to pay a quick visit to Paris, before taking another boat to Marseilles, where he arrived on April 10th. Two days later, his wife and daughter joined him, and on April 15th all three sailed for Colombo.

Clarke's Cirque opened at Price Park on Saturday, May 15th, for a fortnight's season. Here is their own description of the enterprise taken from a four-page leaflet which they had printed:

—THE NEW CIRQUE—

Secretary

..... MR. JOHN ENNIS

Manager

..... MR. ALFRED POWELL

Director

..... MR. ALFRED CLARKE

SIR,

THE MANAGEMENT of the New Cirque present their compliments and solicit your attendance during the visit of this brilliant enterprise confident that a visit will be the forerunner of continued patronage and prove the immeasurable superiority of this company to any touring Asia or Europe.

The management beg to assure the public of the particularly select nature and
SUPERLATIVE EXCELLENCE
OF EVERY TURN

we shall have the honour to present, and that each has been chosen without regard to expense, we having determined to engage the premier European Artistes for this tour.

THE MANAGEMENT

Whilst desirous to observe a becoming modesty of expression, beg leave to hope that in justice to the Artistes engaged, we may be permitted to suggest that comparison between their performances and those of other companies touring Asia cannot possibly be instituted.

THE DEMONSTRABLE SUPERIORITY BEING AS DAY TO NIGHT

It is therefore with the greatest faith we appeal to the Public for support, feeling assured that the merits of the entertainment will be immediately recognized and appreciated. Immediately after the Circus Performance, we present

GRAND CINEMATOGRAPH EXHIBITION

By arrangements with several European Houses we are enabled to show the latest films.

Notice is respectfully directed to the company's

Stud of SPLENDID HORSES.

THE MUSIC

Usually provided by touring companies could not, we imagine, even by the merest tyro in Harmony, be thought an asset.

The Management in the present case do not labour under this disability, having purchased in Paris, at a cost of 50,000 francs

An Immense Orchestrphone This wonderful instrument, played by electric power, and equal in volume and execution to an Orchestra of forty musicians, will render all the latest Popular Airs. Classic Selections and Operatic Overtures.

We would call the attention of all lovers of music to this marvellous instrument.

A Specially Vast Arena has been formed - in short no conceivable detail has been omitted in the endeavor to make THE NEW CIRQUE a deservedly popular rendezvous.

The VAST CIRCULAR MARQUEE IS

ILLUMINATED BY ELECTRICITY

(generated by our own electric plant) and thereby ensuring a brilliant light, and eliminating the uncomfortable heat caused by gas and all such illuminants.

The Seating Plan

Of the Auditorium is arranged at an angle of elevation permitting all to gain an uninterrupted view of the arena, and further, by the arrangements made, occupants of front seats are protected from the discomforts of tan dust thrown from the circle.

All visitors are assured of comfortable seats and our best attention.

We regret the impracticability of noticing more than the above few features, and can therefore but hope the public will honour us with their patronage and judge the intrinsic value of the spectacle, and further, decide that the comfort of our visitors has been studied to the highest degree.

We present our company to your notice direct from a brilliantly successful tour of the Capitals and principal cities of Europe, and with our knowledge of the supreme charm and excellence of the entertainment, and the host of novelties we shall continue to produce, we cannot but feel assured of the public support, "which we once more respectfully solicit" trusting it will be extended to us in Asia as it has been in Europe.

In conclusion we wish to say that, on this, the first tour of the Company, all the Artistes being

(naturally) anxious to make their sojourn in your midst agreeably memorable, will endeavour to outvie one the other with that intention, and trust to receive your sympathies in their laudable desire to please.

AFTERNOON PERFORMANCES WITH FULL PROGRAMME and electric light.

Tickets for all seats obtainable in advance.

Front Boxes (to seat six) or single seats in same, reserved as desired.

Accommodation for Parties of 9 in Boxes if required.

So Powell and Clarke were once more together and on the road. The programme was well received as the following letters show:

Holy Trinity Parsonage,
San Sebastian,
COLOMBO
21.5.1915

Dear Sir,

A friend of mine living in the suburbs had me and an Assyrian Deacon as his guests for the first half of this week. After dinner on Monday night he had hired carriages and nine of us were to go as a party to your Cirque Nouveau. My Assyrian friend was very doubtful about going, as he had been to something of the sort in Johannesburg and "it was not too clean." Well, I think it only fair to say that your whole entertainment from beginning to end was not only "clean" but most thoroughly enjoyable. My ribs ached with laughing and I was struck with the perfection of every act. In fact, I should have liked to be introduced to two of your young men — the younger equestrian and the man who took the part of the serving maid amongst the acrobats.

The Assyrian was delighted and nowhere shocked.

I may say that I am a Highlander of Scotland; I have had my home in Ireland; London; Fredrickton, Canada; Paris, and Chantilly (15 years); Hamburg; and off and on here for 12 years. And I have seen nothing better here.

Yours truly,
(Rev.) A. Mac . . . Mac . . . MA
Vicar

The name is not very legible. The second letter is addressed to Alfred Clarke at the Hotel Bristol. It reads:

Chrystler's Farm
Kotagala
16.5.1915

Dear Mr. Clarke,

I enclose a note for Rs 5/-,

"conscience money," to pay for the seat I occupied in a box at your Circus on Saturday night. Please give the odd rupee to the pretty little girl who did a "stunt" on the rings.

I am curious to know if you are one of the brothers Clarke I so frequently met at the Rouen circus in, I think, 1904 or 5 when Madame Plége's outfit was there. I have a very lively recollection of a double jockey act that used to bring down the house.

I would like to congratulate you on the very excellent show you gave us. Yours is the first circus I have seen out here that in any way resembles the old ones I so often visited in France, where they are second to none in the world, and I was really surprised at the fitness of all your troupe after so few rehearsals.

I hope you will not object to a word of criticism on the subject of your clowns. Their performance might be modified slightly — (I refer to a matter of flour and a misplaced shoe) — more in the interests of the native members of the audience than those of the Europeans.

I will be interested to know if you intend visiting Kandy after your Colombo season is over and I would suggest that a few shows at Hatton (on the Darrawella Club grounds) would pay you very well — Estate coolies being very keen on Circus performances. If you should favour the idea, the latter half of the month is the more suitable, owing to the fact they generally get their pay about then. Apologising for trespassing on your time — and at your show on Saturday.

Yours truly,
Churston A. Walker.

There is a note scrawled on the envelope in red chalk which presumably refers to the gags which Mr. Walker criticised. It runs—

"You know, the clown's wheeze blowing the flour out behind— and kicking the auguste and leaving boot sticking in him."

The last entry in Alfred John Clarke's personal "route book" is August 15th, 1915, so their travels after this date can only be pieced together from newspaper cuttings, photographs, posters, and programmes (when dated) and letters.

They did not take Mr. Walker's advice to work Kandy, but moved straight to Singapore, where they stayed at Beach Road from June 15th-July 3rd. A week later they opened at Premane Ground, Bangkok, remaining there until August 4th.

They then returned to Singapore and set off for Saigon in November.

The programme ran as follows:

1. Miss A. I. Clarke—Equestrienne.
 2. Miss Victoria Alexime and Mr. W. Bowler in an Argentine dance.
 3. Messrs. and Miss Martinez and Baby Florrie, Gymnasts.
 4. Moris and Vincent, clowns.
 5. The Fox Terriers, presented by Miss Dora Clarke.
 6. Mr. Muldoon, the Solid Man.
 7. Martinez Troupe, Acrobats.
- INTERVAL
8. Victoria Alexime, Martha Hamel and Alfred Robles, Flying Trapeze.
 9. Languid Larry.
 10. Mr. and Miss Clarke, Double Equestrians.
 11. Moris and Vincent.
 12. Cinematographic Exhibition.

The identity of some of the noms-de-piste are revealed in the contracts. For instance, Moris and Vincent were the Christian names of the Marianis, whose address is given as 14, Avenue Pere Lachaise, and are described as clown and auguste. With them travelled Mrs. Moris Mariani and Georges Valsesia, who appears to be a member of the troupe. They received £25 a week, and enjoyed the right to perform in any Theatre or Picture Hall in any town after the circus had closed in that town, though this performance could not be advertised until the circus had closed. Return fare to be paid to Marseilles. These facts are taken from a contract which must have been a renewal of the original. It was drawn up in Hongkong on April 2nd, 1917.

The audiences were appreciative and Press notices were good. The *Singapore Free Press* for Wednesday, June 16th, commented:

Of trapeze work alone there were several very accomplished exponents, Miss Victoria Alexime, whose triple somersaults took the breath away, and Miss Marthe Hamel, a skillful Parisienne, pleasing immensely, and Mr. Alfred Robles displaying great daring in some very spectacular feats . . . The Martinez Troupe gave acrobatics, the equal of which has never been seen in Singapore. Maurice (sic) and Vincenzo (sic) in a humorous musical episode, had the house in roars of laughter . . . The two Messrs. Clarke and Miss Clarke were undoubtedly splendid . . . The orchestrathphone supplies the music, and the incidentals are of

the best . . . The artistes appearing last night are only part of the company, so that some capital variations of programme may be anticipated.

The full company seems to have consisted of Alfred and Alfred J. W. Clarke, Messrs. Rory Muldoon, Prosper Vincent, Bridges Norris, Jules Henzen, Michael Mulligan, Alfred Robles, William Ginnett, Willem Cosgrove, Edward Bowler, Wille McGinty and Henry Martinez on the male side, and Victoria Alexime, Edina Bowler, Georges (sic) Valsesia, Florrie Helm, Dora Schumann (Mrs. Clarke junior), Teresini Morris, Maud Martinez and Annie I. Clarke on the distaff side. There is no mention of Powell or of Mrs. Clarke senior, so we must presume that these did not appear in the ring. Alfred Powell, in fact, becomes something of a mystery. The company seems to change from time to time, and on one handbill the names Valsesia, Bennett, Benosard, Giacosa and de Vere appear as well as Moris, Vincent, Martinez, Bowler, Mariani, Cosgrove, Ginnett, Muldoon, Mulligan, Aleximes and Martinez. Written in Clarke's hand, next to these names, is the comment "You will see we have plenty of cullies."

In Saigon the show was billed in French as *Le Cirque Clarke, Equestre Variété de Marseilles*. The tober was *L'Ancien Marché*. Evening performances began at 9:15. On Tuesdays and Sundays there was a matinee at 5:30. After the evening performance a special train left Saigon for Cholon. This information comes from a handbill which also proudly announces that the Circus made its own electric light.

In Saigon, on November 14th, the Martinez Troupe signed a further contract. The form, hand-written on lined paper, is very similar to that signed by the Aleximes. Alfred Clarke's address is given as 46, Ashworth Mansions, Elgin Avenue, London, W., and Mr. H. Martinez's address as 1, Dorset Road, Clapham. The troupe consisted of three men and one lady, who were to be paid £25 a week to do an acrobatic act, gymnastic rings act and an acrobatic dance, the lady not to appear in more than two acts in any one performance. "The services of Miss Florrie will be included as at present in consideration of Mr. Clarke paying half a second class fare for her." No deduction was to be made from the salary of £25, if Florrie did not perform.

After a season in Rangoon, the year 1915 was brought to a close in Madras. And what a brilliant close it was! A letter addressed to A. Powell, Esq., Manager, New Cirque, runs as follows:

Government House
MADRAS
23.12.1915.

Dear Sir,

Their Excellencies have expressed a desire to attend your Circus on Saturday 25th, when I understand you will be having an afternoon performance.

Will you kindly come and see me sometime this morning about it.

Yours faithfully,
H. F. Collingridge, Capt.
Military Secretary.

And the following day:

Dear Sir,

Please reserve 16 seats for the Government House party tomorrow, at the Circus instead of 12 as originally asked for.

Yours faithfully,
H. F. Collingridge, Capt.
Military Secretary.



The two pole big top of Clarke's New Cirque at Shanghai on April 17, 1917. All illustrations from author's collection.

In February, 1916 Clarke's Cirque visited Secunderabad and Calcutta. Under the heading, "The New Cirque, A Clean and Refined Show," an unnamed newspaper on February 18th gave the company "a hearty welcome." From this notice one learns that a "Mlle Georges was brought in a huge egg without a top and suspended from a trapeze. When the egg was opened she was observed to be nothing but a head and armless bust." A photo makes one suspect that this was Georges Valsesia in a version of the "bodyless-head" illusion. We also read that one of Dora's dogs climbed a ladder 20 ft. high and jumped into an outstretched sheet; and Muldoon's act ended with him sitting on a high pyramid of tables and baskets surmounted by a chair, which he rocked to and fro until the whole pile came tumbling down; and Mr. Clarke (which?) appeared as a Roman Gladiator straddling four horses.

Among Alfred Clarke's papers is a document signed by the Chinese Consul General for the Straits Settlement on October 31st, 1916 for nine Cantonese "to pass freely without let or hindrance to Annam, Manilla, Hong-

kong, Shanghai etc." From their photographs these would appear to be ring boys or tent hands.

A dated photograph shows the Clarkes on board s.s. *Amand Behie* in December "somewhere in the China Seas." In February 1917 saw them in Manilla where they held a street parade and march in Hongkong — with a torn tent. They were working Shanghai in April, Hankow in June, Tientsin in July. On October 8th, according to the North China Daily News, "The big circus" — (How Alfred must have liked that description!) — "in Chang Su Ho's Gardens, Shanghai, folded its tents, and the animals, including Grimaldi's wonderful trick elephant are leaving . . . In a day or two Clarke's Cirque will be on the high

seas for Hongkong, Singapore, and Manilla."

Moris and Vincent's names appear on a handbill printed in Kuala Lumpur announcing a special attraction for September 25th. (Although the year is not mentioned, all the evidence points to it being 1917 though why Moris and Vincent's names remain on it after they had been released from their contract I do not know.) There have subsequently been so many acts similar to Clarke's new attraction that I give the handbill in toto:

THE NEW CIRQUE

Change of Programme

The Management present their compliments to the Public and beg to announce that on Monday and at each performance following for —

THE FIRST TIME

IN ANY CIRCUS

will be presented

THE GREAT

AEROPLANE ACT

The Most Sensational Performance Ever Witnessed

THE GRANDEST ACT

EVER PERFORMED

Astounding feats on a trapeze carried round the roof of the Circus by an aeroplane at lightning speed while the artist performs inconceivable feats of daring.

THE GREAT AEROPLANE
ACT FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN ANY CIRCUS

The Most Thrilling Act—The
Most Daring—The Limit of
Recklessness.

As the Management anticipate large crowds at each performance of the Circus during the limited number of Presentations of the Aeroplane Act the Public are respectfully requested to take their seats as early as possible each evening to facilitate entrance.

The Management beg further to announce the arrival DIRECT FROM BRUSSELS of the greatest artistes in their profession THE MESSRS BENJONA'S

(These gentlemen, who were engaged for THE NEW CIRQUE before the outbreak of War, were caught in Brussels at the moment of its occupation by the Germans, they succeeded in escaping from Belgium into Holland six weeks ago and arrived at Singapore in the Nederland Mail boat *Prinz De Nederland* on September 16th)

They will perform at THE NEW CIRQUE on Monday, September 20th and each evening following, and we trust the Public will, "from sympathy for their nationality," and their first appearance under the British Flag, give them a hearty welcome.

The New Acts include:

The Balloon Man, the greatest Clown.

The Wonderful Trampoline Act.

Languid Larry.

The Four-Horse Olympic Act.

Little Florrie.

Acrobatic Act on Galloping Horse.

An Equilibristic Number.

The Dwindling Eight.

The Martinez Troupe.

Messrs. Moris and Vincent in New Comicalities.

The whole forming a stronger programme than our first, (which we are grateful to the Public for having appreciated.)

AFTERNOON PERFORMANCE
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 25th

There is a photograph of the apparatus for the aeroplane act taken when the circus was in Bombay in May, 1918. It shows a small aeroplane (very like that used by the Kimris, de Riaz and the rest) at one end of a revolving arm, counterbalanced with weights and a trapeze at the other. But instead of the apparatus being slung from the roof, it is supported by what may be described as a miniature

Eiffel Tower standing in the centre of the ring.

On May 6th, 1918, Alfred Clarke came to an arrangement with a certain Maurice E. Bandman, whereby Bandman would pay him £150 a week for his circus to appear in various towns in Egypt, Sudan, Palestine and India according to Bandman's bookings, it being understood by Clarke that if, through no fault of the circus, a full week of 14 performances could not be given, then the full amount would still be paid.



Alfred John William Clarke in Copenhagen, June 1921, dressed for jockey act.

The tour started off well enough, opening in Cairo on June 2nd. Here they appeared at the Kursaal, under the joint direction of Bandman and A. Dalbagni. The show was billed as Clarke's Royal English Circus, and the programme was changed every week. The *Egyptian Gazette* referred to "Mr. Clarke Junior's seemingly impossible feat of somersaulting from the centre of the ring to the back of his fast galloping horse. Mr. Clarke has a standing challenge of £5,000 that no other man can perform this trick."

From Cairo the circus went to Alexandria and to Ismailia on August 6th. Here things began to go wrong. First no musicians were available. Although Bandman had found them in Cairo and Alexandria, none could be found at Ismailia. In spite of the fact that the circus was ready to open on August 8th, the first performance was not given until the 10th; and while the season should have continued until the 18th, Bandman cut it short on the 13th. Kantara and Port Said should

have followed, permission, however, was not forthcoming. Bandman had also proposed some film propaganda scheme, which was not a part of the original contract, but this was turned down by the authorities. Bandman therefore decided that Clarke and his circus should return to India. But here again Bandman or his agent seems to have been most inept, booking ground at Poonah although Clarke had visited that town a short while previously and found business bad. Bandman's agent in India, a Mr. Henry, cancelled the Poona booking and tried for a site at Dhobi Talao in Bombay, but that was booked until October 6th by De Villier's Variety Company. Clarke showed there from October 9th-20th. Karachi was supposed to follow but this was cancelled because of the epidemic of influenza which had broken out there. It was arranged to visit Ceylon instead, although this was not one of the places mentioned in the contract. They did perform in Ceylon until November 25th. When it rained at Mattara and Kaluktara Mr. Henry did not think it worth while giving a performance. In Colombo the Fire Brigade objected to the site which Henry had selected, and they had to move. The disastrous contract was terminated on January 15th. But Maurice E. Bandman did not pay Clarke whatever was due. A letter dated April 3rd, 1919 reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Clarke,

Before departure I have to thank you for your very regular payment at all times during my long engagement with you, and particularly for those times Mr. Bandman has not paid you. Regretting the above circumstances has compelled you to sell off your property and trusting you will have a more prosperous future and thanking you for the long and happy engagement, believe me, dear Mr. Clarke, with the best of good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,
Jimmie James

Alfred Clarke was not the kind of man to take debt-dodging lying down. He sued Maurice Bandman, and the case was heard in the Bombay Law Courts at the beginning of December, 1919, before the Hon. Mr. Justice Kaji. Clarke claimed that he should have received £4,028.11.5d. but had only been given £1,869.16.6d. He therefore claimed £2,350.14.11d, plus £600 damages for breach of agreement. After almost a week the case was settled when Bandman's counsel offered to pay Rs. 16,000 and Clarke accepted.

From now on the references in the Clarke collection grow scarce. When Alfred came back . . . what he had to sell while waiting for Bandman to pay

... how he passed the next few years ... all this must be found out from other sources. These final notes in the story of the Clarkes will, therefore, be but random jottings to serve as guide lines for future research.

On February 6th, 1921, Alfred Augustus Clarke died, aged 80, at 58, South Side, Clapham Common, of valvular disease of the heart.

Young Alfred John William worked in Copenhagen that summer and then left for Australia and New Zealand. He was in Dunedin on New Year's Eve. At this time he was with Wirth's Circus.

In *The Theatre Magazine* for July 1st, 1922, a reference to Clarke being billed as "the greatest rider in the world" brought forth this comment: "Yes, he is fine — the finest jockey rider I have ever seen. But he is by no means the best all-round rider. All the Clarkes—I refer to the family—are good riders. But the greatest of the lot—the greatest all-round rider in the world, I would say—is the present Mr. Clarke's uncle, I saw him in America. One of his feats is a double somersault—feet to feet—atop a moving bareback horse."

At this time young Alfred was juggling on horseback, as well as "work-

ing the jockey." In October *The Melbourne Hawklet* reported, "somersaulting from the ground onto the back of a galloping horse is only one of the astonishing feats that Alfred Clarke performs in the course of his wonderful jockey act. He appears in a second turn during which he indulges in juggling while standing on a horse galloping round the ring. If Clarke is not getting £200 a week he ought to be, for he is worth it."

The Australian public liked Alfred and Alfred liked Australia. He decided to settle there and after divorcing Dora, he married Eileen May Wirth on September 4th, 1926, while in New South Wales. They had no children. In 1928, Wirth's Circus celebrated its Jubilee. The programme included The Klarkoskies, "Russian" Equestrians. This was exactly sixty years after Alfred John Clarke was born and Footitt, Powell and Clarke's Circus set out on their second season from Nottingham. In those sixty years the Clarkes had been acclaimed in all five Continents.

My task is nearly done. A. J. W. Clarke died in Sydney on October 12th, 1951. Much remains to be recorded, but that can only be gained from sources other than those which

came my way after Alfred John's death on December 26th, 1958.

When John Frederick Clarke died, a few years before, his estate reflected his life — or the life of any great circus artiste. His stocks and shares remind one of the scenes of his family's triumphs: Hungarian 7½% 1924 Bonds, United Railways of Havana, Chinese 5% 1912 Bonds, Mexican 6% 10 Year Treasury Notes 1913 Assented, Bulgaria 7½% Stabilization Loan, City of Osaka 6% Harbour Construction Loan, Mexican Light and Power, Congo Free State Lottery Bonds, Panama Canal ...

Ida Iona, his wife, died on December 1st, 1948, aged 80 at 58, South Side, Clapham Common. Annie, wife of Alfred John died in 1940 and for nearly 18 years — until within a year of his own death — he went every morning at 7 o'clock to pay his respects at his wife's grave.

But the Clarkes live on, not only in those members of the family now to be found in various corners of the world, but in the memories of all who saw them, either on the flying trapeze or as The Champion Jockey Riders of the World.

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CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May 1, 1981 thru April 30, 1982

Balance in First National Bank May 1, 1981 554.05

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Dues	17202.00
Subscriptions	2518.75
Back Issue Sales	656.45
Advertising	1127.00
Convention	288.00

Total Receipts 21792.20

22346.25

Disbursements:

Bandwagon Printing	19139.91
Bandwagon Postage	595.00
Bandwagon Mailing Expense	595.73
Sec'y-Treas. Postage	507.00
Convention Expense	402.92
Canadian Exchange & Bank Service Ch.	5.56
Misc. Expense	426.35

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Audited statement prepared by Gerald F. Combs,

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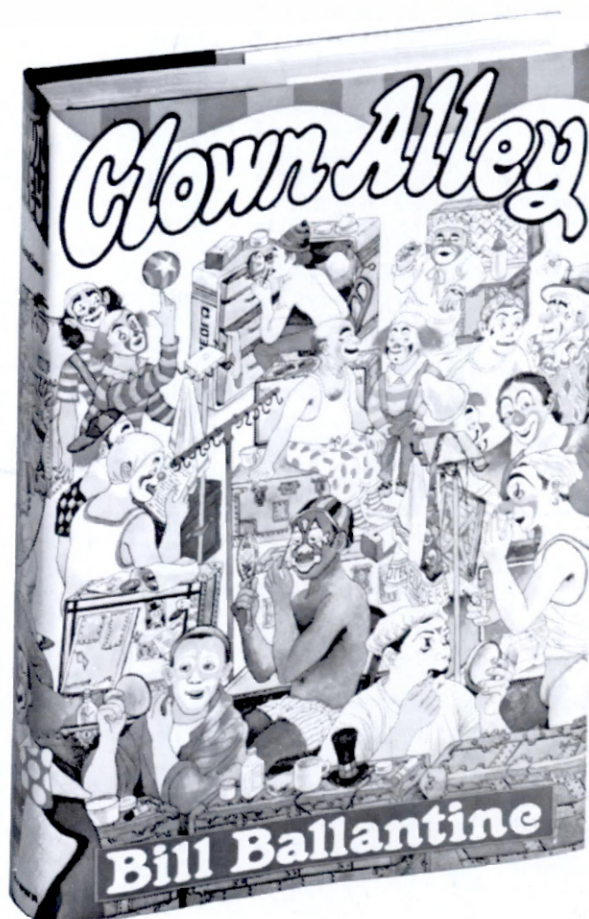
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